

Places of Civic Belonging Among Transnational Youth

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation study investigated how immigrant youth attending two different high schools for late-arrival immigrants in New York City constructed civic belonging by attending to their everyday enactments of citizenship across the contexts of school, neighborhood and home. Civic belonging refers to the embodied social practices by which immigrant youth cultivate social trust and construct an emotional connection to particular communities and places. In conducting this research, I utilized a critical visual research methodology, as well as interviews and focus groups. Data was collected from 10 immigrant youth from Guinea, the Gambia, Senegal, Yemen, Bangladesh and the Dominican Republic. My findings were that participants constructed civic belonging in school by creating social trust that bridged cultural, religious, linguistic, and ethnic differences. In their neighborhoods, their civic belonging was restricted by a politics of belonging that created distrust and misrecognition of their cultural and religious identities. Finally, my participants constructed civic belonging in relation to their understandings of home. Family relationships mediated their civic belonging by reinforcing home country ties. This study has implications for how public schools can better educate immigrant youth as citizens who build solidarity with diverse others and work towards a common good. This is critical in today's world that is more connected through the movement of people, and yet, where many nation-states seek to limit the rights of immigrants to belong within their borders.

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DEDICATION

To Ng Song Choon

And Maria Seyfried

Chapter 1 – INTRODUCTION

The preparation of migrant youth for democratic citizenship has special relevance today. The number of worldwide migrants in 2015 are estimated to be 244 million, an increase of 41% since the year 2000 (United Nations, 2016). According to the latest U.S. Census (2012) the foreign-born make up approximately 13% of the total population in the United States. This percentage is even greater in metropolitan areas that have traditionally received immigrants, such as New York City, where 36% of residents were born elsewhere (NYC Department of Planning, 2013). These demographic changes are reflected in the population of students attending public schools. An estimated 77,000 New York City public school students are foreign-born. More than 40% of them speak a language other than English at home, suggesting an even greater percentage of youth with immigrant ties (NYC Department of Education, 2013). The growth in diversity of public schools requires civic educators to rethink how they educate students as citizens in a world that is increasingly interconnected through the movement of people.

In response to globalization and greater human mobility worldwide we are witnessing a resurgence of nationalist politics and a tightening of nation-state borders to limit immigration. The exit of Britain from the European Union, as decided by referendum in 2016, and the election of Donald Trump as president of the U.S., are but two examples of the turn away from global civic engagement, and an attempt to re-invigorate restrictive criteria for national belonging. Donald Trump's presidential campaign slogan, "Make America Great Again," speaks directly to the political project (Yuval-Davis, 2006) of constructing what it means to belong to America. Since assuming the presidency Donald Trump has declared his intention to build a wall between the United States and Mexico in order to curb the movement of people from Central and South

America into the United States, and signed an executive order banning people from seven Muslim majority nations from entering the U.S. In a speech to the Conservative Political Action Conference, Trump referred to the building of a wall at the U.S.-Mexico border as “getting bad people out of this country, people that should be whether it’s drugs or murder or other things” (Trump, 2017). Trump’s public statements casting migrants as criminal are meant to establish specific criteria of belonging.

These political developments make clear the continued role of the nation-state in regulating the boundaries of the imagined political community and determining who is able to feel like they belong in the U.S. (Anderson, 1983). Developing a sense of belonging to the body politic is a critical aspect of the civic preparation of all young people (Maira, 2009; Mitchell & Parker, 2008). This civic mission of public education takes on greater urgency due to the divided nature of U.S. society today according to nationality, race, class, ethnicity, gender, and religion. For instance, there is evidence of increasing anti-immigrant rhetoric following the election of President Trump, which some Americans have taken as a referendum on the rights of immigrants to belong in the U.S. In the first month after the election, the Southern Poverty Law Center collected over 1,300 reports of bias-related harassment across the country (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2017). The most frequently reported type of hate speech was directed against immigrants. Anti-Muslim intimidation was also widely reported. More than 37% of instances of harassment directly referenced Donald Trump, including his campaign slogans, or disparaging remarks he made about immigrants, such as calling Mexicans criminals and rapists.

The surge in anti-immigrant rhetoric has served the political purpose of excluding migrant students from the imagined political community. How are migrant youth responding to this politics of exclusion? How does it affect their understanding of self and other, or their desire

to become American? Moreover, how are schools and educators to respond? How can civic educators teach students to bridge these social divisions? In schools, migrant youth can experience a sense of belonging when they work with peers, teachers, and family members to pursue common goals. Doing so builds social capital, or the “features of social life – networks, norms, and trust – that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives” (Putnam, 1995, p. 664–665). Schools are public places where students can learn how to build social trust across difference. A belief in one’s ability to bridge social divisions and build social trust with others in the pursuit of common goals contributes to a sense of belonging and an emotional connection to people and place. For transnational youth, their connection to places and people, and the networks that enable them to work towards common goals, may be further sustained by ties to their home countries (Knight, 2011). Migrant youth develop a sense of belonging within a transnational social field that is made up of social relations spanning the borders between countries.

Problem Statement

Existing research on civic education pre-dating the current political climate suggests that schools were already failing to prepare migrant youth for democratic citizenship. The historic response of schools to ethnic, cultural, racial and linguistic diversity has been to impose on the *pluribus* the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture in order to create an *unum*. This illusion of unity has been reinforced by an assimilationist conception of citizenship (Allen, 2004; Banks, 2008). The effects of current models of citizenship education on migrant youth can partly be deduced from what we already know about the inequalities in civic learning opportunities between different ethnoracial groups, and suburban and urban students (Atkins & Hart, 2003; Levinson, 2012). Students at low socio-economic status schools do not perform as well on standardized tests of

civic knowledge, such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Civics Assessment (Levinson, 2012), and are less likely to experience a social studies curriculum that encourages political participation by allowing them to discuss current events, or an open classroom climate (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008; Niemi & Junn, 1998). These findings have important implications for the civic preparation of migrant youth, who may experience “triple segregation” (Orfield & Lee, 2006), leading to racial, socio-economic and linguistic isolation.

A lack of civic learning opportunities is likely to negatively impact migrant students in additional ways. For instance, migrant students who are residentially segregated in urban communities are likely to attend under-resourced schools where they are taught by less experienced educators (Britz & Batalova, 2013). High rates of urban residential segregation have also been correlated with lower levels of political participation, political knowledge, and commitment to democratic principles, all of which are key components of a civic identity (Atkins & Hart, 2003). Migrant youth living in segregated communities have additional experiences that differ from native-born youth, which influence how they make meaning of civic life. For example, roughly 50% of migrant students are labeled “limited English proficient” in the United States (Britz & Batalova, 2013). The most common form of language instruction for emergent bilinguals takes place in classrooms separate from their native-born peers (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2010). This model of delivering English language services has been criticized for segregating emergent bilingual students and limiting their exposure to mainstream instruction (Slama, 2014). A recent study found that immigrant youth take fewer advanced social science courses than their native-born peers (Callahan & Muller, 2013). These findings have consequences for migrant youth, who are more likely to register to vote if they accumulate more social science credits (Callahan, Muller, & Schiller, 2008). This form of *de facto* tracking and

physical separation of migrant students may also lead them to feel like they do not belong (Olsen, 1997), undermining the democratic experiences schools ought to be providing.

Another way in which immigrant youth civic experiences may be unique is in instances where the desire to maintain cultural practices and traditions, or contribute to the immigrant and cultural community, are a driving force behind their civic actions (Jensen, 2008; Seif, 2010). For instance, in order to become civically engaged, migrant students may draw upon their ethnic and immigrant identity as a source of resilience in the face of racism and prejudice, as well as an awareness of the sacrifices of family members to give them greater life opportunities (Louie, 2012). In such cases, assimilationist conceptions of citizenship that deny immigrant youth cultural ties may have a negative effect on their civic engagement. Finally, transnational migrant youth may be limited in their ability to develop civic attachments when schools treat their sense of belonging to more than one nation-state as a form of disloyalty or an obstacle to citizenship (Abu El-Haj, 2007).

Public schools can better prepare migrant youth for citizenship by functioning as “mini-polities” that provide direct “experiences of membership, of exercising prerogatives, and of assuming obligations” (Flanagan, 2013, p. 2). As public spaces, schools make belonging to an imagined political community concrete in the lives of young people by providing them with opportunities to create social trust with peers and teachers (Yuval-Davis, 2006). When students engage in classroom discussion, for example, they are able to learn how to solve academic and social problems with others who may be acquaintances, but not necessarily intimates (Allen, 2004; Parker, 2010). Through these experiences young people learn and practice norms of reciprocity, equity, and self-sacrifice, all of which are needed to bridge social divisions and feel a sense of belonging.

However, much of the educational research on citizenship education uses large datasets and survey methods, and relies on definitions of civic engagement and knowledge predetermined by researchers. Such studies make an important contribution to our understanding of school-based factors that predict civic action in young adulthood, such as opportunities to learn about the electoral process, experiencing a participative school culture, or performing community service (Torney-Purta, 2002). However, while there may be a statistical relationship between such factors and later engagement in formal political activities, qualitative approaches are more effective at explaining the process by which situations, events and people are related (Maxwell, 2013), such as how it is that migrant youth make meaning of their civic experiences. Research is needed that elicits youth perspectives on their own citizenship, and the process by which they come to feel a sense of belonging. Furthermore, much of the literature on youth civic engagement focuses narrowly on voting or political party affiliation as measures of civic action. This has limited the scope of what researchers can observe since most school-aged youth are not yet able to participate in such activities, which may also contribute to a view of migrant youth as disinterested political observers (Putnam, 2000).

Finally, present scholarly work on the civic belonging and identity of migrant youth rarely considers how their understandings of citizenship are informed by their civic experiences inside and out of the school context. It is frequently assumed that all students will respond to the civic education curriculum in the same way, regardless of their prior civic experiences (Rubin, 2007). This lack of attention paid to youth conceptions of citizenship and perspectives on civic identity may be rooted in an assumption that youth are merely immature versions of adults (Biesta, Lawy, & Kelly, 2009; Maira, 2004), and incapable of forming political theories worthy of scholarly attention. However, adolescent youth perspectives on citizenship are significant, not

only because they offer a window onto their emerging civic identities (Flanagan, 2013), but also because they make a valuable contribution to the reimagining of citizenship in a world that is rapidly changing due to the movement of people in an interdependent world.

Research Questions

In order to explore the ways in which migrant youth establish a sense of civic belonging in the context of their transnational lives, this dissertation study is guided by the following research questions: (1) How do transnational youth attending an urban high school for late-arrival migrants¹ develop a sense of *civic belonging* in places within and across nation-state borders? (2) In what places do transnational youth feel that they belong, across the contexts of school, family, and neighborhood? (3) How are the civic identities of transnational youth shaped by their sense of belonging in places?

Conceptual Framework

In this section I discuss how civic belonging is used as concept in this study to explain how migrant youth enact citizenship in their everyday lives. I begin by highlighting the ambiguities of citizenship as a legal status. Next, I explain how belonging becomes politicized to exclude migrant youth. I end by considering how citizenship is enacted in particular places.

Uncertainties of Citizenship

Scholars in the field of social studies education have frequently conceptualized citizenship as a legal status afforded to individuals, encompassing a particular set of rights and

¹ Late-arrival is defined in this study as first-generation migrants who arrived as adolescents, after having completed the majority of their education in their home country, or moved back and forth between schools in the U.S. and their home country (Salinas, 2006). Another term found in the literature is “newcomer” (Feinberg, 2000, Taylor, 2013; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco & Todorova, 2008). I have chosen not to use the term “newcomer,” which suggests a person who is an outsider to a place; this is not how some of my participants thought of themselves.

responsibilities, and which requires certain skills and civic knowledge in order to exercise those political rights and responsibilities in a democratic society (Callahan & Muller, 2013; Kahne & Middaugh, 2010). This particular conceptualization has often led to inquiries into whether young people are engaging in formal political activities, such as voting, joining a political party or staying abreast of current events in the news. Examples of the kinds of knowledge and skills thought to be necessary to engage in these political activities include an understanding of government, American history, and critical thinking skills for the purpose of evaluating facts and engaging in reasoned debate (Engle & Ochoa, 1988; Parker, 2010; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

While these are indisputably important civic skills and knowledge for young people to learn in school, the mass movement of people around the globe necessitates a re-examination of several key assumptions underlying such a conceptualization of citizenship. First, it can no longer be assumed that citizenship neatly coincides with the geographic boundaries of nation-states (Castles & Davidson, 2000). Migrants living in a particular geographic territory can have varied relationships to the legal apparatus of the nation-state. The migrant youth participating in this dissertation study, for example, included both U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents, who do not necessarily share the same set of rights. People residing in the geographic territory of the U.S. may also include temporary visa holders and naturalized citizens. Moreover, non-citizens do enjoy some of the same legal rights as citizens. Undocumented youth, for instance, are guaranteed a right to a public education (*Plyler v. Doe*, 1982).

The complex relationship between the legal standing of migrants *vis-à-vis* the U.S. nation-state, and their right to belong, recently came to the fore following the executive action signed by President Trump, banning all people from entering the U.S. from seven Muslim-majority nations (Executive Order No. 13769, 2017). The travel restrictions were applied equally

to people who were legal permanent residents, those with refugee status, as well as those with temporary visas for the right to work or study in the U.S. People who before the ban may have felt a secure sense of belonging due to their legal status, whether a legal citizen or not, quite suddenly had their right to belong denied and found themselves labeled as a potential threat to American security.

Citizenship can be conceptualized as more than a legal status that people do, or do not, possess. Due to the impossibility of face-to-face contact between all citizens, Benedict Anderson (1983) referred to nations as “imagined communities.” To be a citizen includes having a relationship to an imagined collectivity, government and state institutions, and other individual citizens. This relationship depends on being able to trust state actors who are meant to guard the rights of citizens to belong in some relevant aspect, which can be independent of any formal legal status. It follows that being a U.S. citizen does not necessarily confer a sense that one belongs, because of an inability to trust political institutions, or due to being excluded from the nation-state, community and/or some other collectivity. Likewise, it is also possible to feel a sense of belonging while lacking formal citizenship status. Therefore, citizenship has an important relational aspect; the social ties between individual citizens and the imagined collective to which they belong are formed through social exchanges occurring in all aspects of everyday life. In this dissertation, citizenship is theorized as a set of everyday, embodied social practices that are enacted by migrant youth in classrooms, neighborhoods and home environments. These social practices include developing social bonds that cross linguistic, ethnic, racial and other boundaries in order to develop trust.

Without the ability to develop social trust with one’s fellow citizens, there is no possibility of achieving a common good, by recognizing the needs of others as part of one’s own

self-interest (Allen, 2004). Schools have a critical role to play in cultivating the relational aspects of citizenship that allow young people to form emotional attachments to people and places. These emotional attachments form the necessary foundation to care for others and take civic action. For these reasons, I focus on creating trust through social relationships as a key civic attribute contributing to citizenship as a sense of belonging to a particular collectivity, whether that be a classroom, school, neighborhood, nation-state or home country.

It is necessary to further recognize that belonging is constructed in particular social, political and economic contexts where power is distributed unevenly. Yuval-Davis (2006) outlines an analytical framework that distinguishes belonging from a politics of belonging, which “comprises specific political projects aimed at constructing belonging in particular ways to particular collectivities...” (p. 197). The aforementioned executive order can be considered an example of a political project that constructs what it means to belong in America by excluding Muslims and labeling them as a threat to national security. Additionally, the Trump administration’s “America First” policy agenda establishes allegiance to America as a criterion of belonging by putting America’s interests above all other nations, or people, around the world (The White House, n.d.). This excludes American citizens who see their own interests as interdependent with people in other parts of the world, or migrant youth who may have multiple allegiances or affiliations with the U.S., their home country, or diasporic communities.

Whereas these examples highlight the political projects of nation-states to delimit belonging, it must be noted that migrant youth contest the political projects of nation-states through everyday social interactions. Migrant youth who affiliate with places or collectivities outside of or unrelated to the U.S. in order to create social trust are enacting their citizenship as belonging. They may resist civic exclusion, for example, by identifying more strongly as

diasporic citizens, or by adopting a regional identity as African or Arab, in order to nurture an emotional attachment to home outside America. These attempts to forge a relationship to different collectivities are theorized in this study as forms of civic belonging. Forgoing the desire to belong to the U.S., and viewing themselves instead as sojourners (Zúñiga, & Hamann, 2009), can also be understood as civic responses to the social exclusions they experience. As they make sense of their relationship to U.S. society, they may construct counter-narratives of themselves as belonging in America temporarily in order to acquire a U.S. education before returning to their home countries.

Emplaced Citizenship

The relationship between citizenship and belonging can also be understood by considering how people develop a sense of place (Massey, 1994; Schmidt, 2010). The additional concept of place calls necessary attention to how citizenship is produced and enacted through everyday social practices. Places can be described according to their physical and human characteristics. In the social studies curriculum places are taught as locations that have unique plant or animal life, topographies, architectural styles, land uses, political systems, etc. However, in addition to their physical and human characteristics places are also social constructions; they are given meaning by the people who occupy particular spaces (Schmidt, 2010).

The relationship between citizenship and place is explored in this study in order to understand how migrant youth develop a sense of belonging. Sense of belonging refers to what it means to the people occupying a shared space to belong in that space. However, as Schmidt notes, “because places are social constructs evolving from ongoing contestation... understanding this sense of place also requires understanding how that sense of place arose, for whom it exists, and the implications of when it is asserted or preserved” (p. 108). In other words, not everyone

experiences places in the same way or derives the same meaning from shared spaces. People make meaning of space from different social locations. Viewing citizenship as embodied directs necessary attention to how people are differently situated in the public sphere, in terms of gender, language, ethnicity and race (Leitner & Ehrkamp, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Whether or not migrant youth feel comfortable or safe in a particular space is explored in this study in order to understand how they develop an emotional attachment and identification with place.

Moreover, forming a social connection to places is understood as the enactment of the relational aspects of citizenship. Our ability to build trust and form social relationships with other citizens is shaped by how we experience a place as either welcoming or exclusionary.

Migrant youth also construct a sense of place and belonging in the context of the transnational ties they sustain (Abu El-Haj, 2015; Maira, 2009). Therefore, a transnational lens is necessary to understand how they experience the places they inhabit. Glick-Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton (1992) define transnationalism as “the process by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement” (p. 1). When migrant youth form attachments to places and make meaning of space, they do so by looking forwards to U.S. society, as well as backwards to the home country. The concept of a transnational social field (Levitt & Glick-Schiller, 2004) helps to explain how migrant youth pivot back and forth between the home country and the U.S. as they develop a sense of place. Migrants, as well as the people and places they leave behind, occupy a shared space that is fluid and relational. Instead of choosing between integrating into the host society or maintaining ties to the home country, migrant youth may anchor themselves in both places simultaneously. Depending on the place and social context, including school, home or community, at different times they may identify more with their homeland, the host society, or a combination of both.

One of the ways that transnational ties come to matter for how migrant youth make sense of place is by contributing to a “dual frame of reference” (Louie, 2006a; Sánchez, 2007). This allows migrant youth to make comparisons between the host society context and the home country. Some of the concrete actions that can sustain this dual frame of reference include communicating with friends and family in their home countries through social media, sending remittances, maintaining their native language, or by making return visits. Through these cross-border practices, migrant youth construct an understanding of place, both in the host society and of the native country, that shapes their sense of belonging and civic identities. Whether migrant youth consider a place to be caring or welcoming, for example, is likely to be affected by how they experience that place relative to their home country. Through a dual frame of reference, these youths may identify more with certain places that remind them of their home country, or they may distance themselves from places they experience as unfamiliar.

For many transnational youth, family arrangements and relationships that span national boundaries inform their civic identities and feelings of social responsibility beyond the nation-state (Rodríguez, 2009; Sánchez & Machado-Casas, 2009). Migration can include physical separation from family members, as well as reunification after several years of living apart. Mothers, fathers and extended family members often continue to parent their children transnationally, and family ties continue to mediate a sense of belonging, despite the physical separation caused by migration. Therefore, family ties among migrant youth can contribute to their spaces of belonging both locally and globally. Social obligations to family can take place “across lifetime events and geographic locations” (Knight & Watson, 2014, pp. 545). These family ties constitute another web of social relationships within which social trust and social capital may be generated.

Civic Belonging

In sum, this dissertation study proposes a reconceptualization of citizenship as *civic belonging*, which takes into consideration the web of relationships between citizenship, belonging and place. By attending to the everyday enactments of citizenship in places, civic belonging refers to the embodied social practices by which migrant youth cultivate social trust, and construct an emotional connection and identification with particular collectivities, including their school, affinity groups, linguistic community, neighborhood, region, home country, etc. This conceptualization of citizenship as civic belonging can help to explain how young people make sense of citizenship in light of the social divisions between various groups in society. The rapid movement of people around the globe has resulted in an even more diverse public sphere, including the public space of school. As they fulfill their civic mission, social studies educators must re-envision what it means to prepare their migrant students to belong as citizens.

In the next chapter I provide an analysis and synthesis of the literature on the civic education of migrant youth. Education for citizenship has been studied in a variety of disciplines, by researchers employing different theoretical approaches. In my review of the literature I draw from three broad areas of scholarship as they relate to civic education and immigration: developmental psychology, social studies education, and the anthropology of education.

Chapter 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter I provide a synthesis and analysis of the literature on civic education with immigrant youth, and argue that research is needed that treats civic belonging as a necessary element of citizenship. In order to address my first research question about how migrant youth develop civic belonging, I provide an overview of the different elements of citizenship found in the literature, including its civil, political and social aspects. Current research on civic knowledge and engagement focuses primarily on the political aspects, while failing to consider how the different elements of citizenship are tied to belonging. In order to address my second research question regarding the relationship between belonging and place, I then discuss the literature on theories of transnationalism and place. Finally, I analyze the literature on how civic identities are shaped by belonging and place in order to attend to my third research question.

Citizenship as Civil, Political and Social

Worldwide migration, and the diversification of public schools, requires scholars to reconsider conceptions of citizenship as a set of rights, duties, and obligations extending to all the inhabitants of a particular territory or sovereign nation-state, has become hotly contested due to globalization (Castles & Davidson, 2000). In this section I review the literature on the different conceptions of citizenship in relation to the increased pluralization of U.S. society. Citizenship is studied across many disciplines outside political science, including anthropology, sociology, history, and cultural studies, to name a few. I narrow my focus to how conceptions of citizenship education with migrant youth can meet the new global demands.

The ambiguities surrounding what it means to be a citizen is not a recent phenomenon. In fact, the category of citizen has never been universally applied to everyone living in the

geographic territory of the United States (Allen, 2004). Throughout the history of this nation the experiences of racial and ethnic minority groups attest to the ways in which citizenship functioned to exclude people as often as to include them, on the basis of race, class, gender, ability, language, and nativity (Ladson-Billings, 2004).

Contributing to a more multifaceted understanding of citizenship, T.H. Marshall (1964) outlined three components of citizenship: the *civil*, *political* and *social*. The recognition that citizenship requires access to all three aspects of citizenship is an important step towards addressing the civic exclusions immigrant youth face today. The civil aspect of citizenship includes legal rights and freedoms, such as the right to free speech, or to own property. Political citizenship refers to the ability to participate in the political process, such as through the right to vote. In the case of immigrants, the political aspect of citizenship also includes the right to naturalize. U.S. immigration and naturalization laws, beginning with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, and continuing to the formal end of national quotas in 1965, have left an indelible mark on the racial composition of the U.S. citizenry (Haney-Lopez, 1995). This history is reflected in several Supreme Court cases in which immigrants from as diverse origins as Hawaii, China, Burma, and the Philippines were all denied access to citizenship because of their skin color, whereas applicants from Mexico and Armenia were designated “White,” and hence could become naturalized citizens (Haney-Lopez, 1995).

Social citizenship refers to the need for a minimum economic and social standard of living that is necessary for full civic participation, such as the right to education, health care, housing and other social services. Migrant youth can be denied access to social citizenship if they don't have access to a minimum standard of schooling, such as teachers who are highly trained. Social citizenship underscores the fact that having the right to vote does not guarantee

full citizenship if one does not also have adequate civic learning opportunities in school. References to social citizenship in the literature (Marshall, 1964; Castles & Davidson, 2000) relate mostly to the equal distribution of resources to schools, or perhaps the distribution of civic knowledge; however, the social aspect of citizenship should also include access to the social networks that are necessary for the accumulation of social capital (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000; Stanton-Salazar, R., 1997). In this important respect, schools that subtract from migrant youths' social capital deny them access to the social aspects of citizenship (Valenzuela, 1999).

Recognizing access to social networks and social capital as an essential social right, points to a final dimension of citizenship: *cultural citizenship*. More recently, scholars in the field of citizenship studies have argued that culture is a valuable asset citizens draw upon to become active civic participants (Kymlicka, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Rosaldo, 1999). The denial of cultural resources also limits access to some of the social rights of citizenship, such the social networks. According to Kymlicka (1995), individual autonomy and freedom is dependent on being a member of a societal culture. Kymlicka defines a societal culture as that “which provides its members with meaningful ways of life across the full range of human activities, including social, educational, religious, recreational and economic life” (pp. 76). A further defining characteristic of societal cultures is they are territorially bound and based on a common language. Without access to a set of shared values, individuals would be unable to make meaningful choices about a variety of social pursuits, and therefore have limited freedom.

Cultural membership provides other, if less tangible, benefits. For instance, Kymlicka surmises that, because membership is based on belonging, and does not discriminate according to accomplishment, it plays an important role in identity formation. Therefore, well-being to a degree depends on cultural identity, because from it individuals derive a sense of belonging. For

this reason, when a culture in society is not respected, this does harm to its members, and to their self-identity (Taylor, 1994). The addition of cultural citizenship, as another dimension of citizenship, therefore, recognizes the right to cultural recognition, and access to a range of meaningful life choices, as a precondition to full citizenship.

On this basis, Kymlicka argues that “national minority” groups are at a disadvantage in the civic sphere, which presumes Anglo-conformity. Kymlicka uses the term “national minority” to draw a distinction between “previously self-governing, territorially concentrated cultures” who are incorporated into a larger state, and what he refers to as “ethnic minorities,” who wish to be integrated into the larger society, rather than exist separately alongside it (pp. 10). For instance, aboriginal minority groups are examples of a “national minority” living within the borders of the United States. However, Kymlicka considers immigrants to be examples of “ethnic minorities,” because they seek integration into the culturally dominant society. Moreover, unlike “national minorities” who never left their original territory to join a new society, immigrants chose to break the bonds of their former societal culture, in order to become residents of their adopted homeland. In spite of the differences between “national” and “ethnic” minorities, however, ethnic minorities still have the right to be recognized, and to preserve their heritage, such as by maintaining their native language. Otherwise, they would be at a disadvantage in mainstream society. Kymlicka considers this a form of accommodating ethnic minorities in the mainstream society, as opposed to setting up a separate societal culture, as some Native American groups have done.

Another scholar advancing the term cultural citizenship is Rosaldo (1999), who argues that conceptions of citizenship are culturally mediated. He critiques the universal conception of citizenship by arguing that, in order to understand the concept of citizenship, “one needs to

distinguish the formal level of theoretical universality from the substantive level of exclusionary and marginalizing practices” (Rosaldo, 1999, pp. 253). These exclusions have given rise to the term “second-class citizenship,” for example, which can be applied to members of historically marginalized groups. Ladson-Billings (2004) and Banks (2008) offer the civil rights movement as an example of how membership in a particular ethnic group or culture can motivate civic activism. Ladson-Billings (2004) argues that it was only by drawing upon their cultural identities, for example through their participation in the Black church, that African Americans were able to successfully broaden our definition of citizenship to extend beyond those who are White, male and propertied.

However, the distinctions between the civil, political, social and cultural components of citizenship may not go far enough in interrogating the ways in which citizens are made into subjects. According to Ong (1999), greater “attention [should be] focused on the everyday processes whereby people, especially immigrants, are made into subjects of a particular nation-state” (Ong, 1999, pp. 263). Ong argues that it is insufficient to advocate for the mere recognition and inclusion of the cultural rights of certain marginalized groups, without also attending to the ways in which the state produces cultural subjects. Ong’s view of cultural citizenship takes into account the dialectical power relationship between the state and the subjects of a particular nation or territory, and how these relations produce certain kinds of citizens. She contends that cultural citizenship is not constructed unilaterally by immigrants, but that state power also constructs what it means to belong as a cultural citizen. Nation-states set the criterion for belonging based on social location (i.e. intersections of race, gender, class, etc.) to construct cultural citizenship in particular ways (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Citizenship can be theorized not only in connection with the laws and institutions that guarantee a set of rights and responsibilities to citizens of a nation-state, but also as a set of ordinary habits that uphold the institutions of democratic life. According to Danielle Allen (2004), the violent reaction to school desegregation following the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision, as captured in photographs that were circulated across the country by news media, led to the reconstitution of relations between citizens. The view that “citizenship consists primarily of duties (like voting, paying taxes, and serving on juries or in the military) to institutions that support citizens’ rights” was exposed as a myth (p. 9).

Allen introduces the term “political friendship” to refer to new habits of citizenship that are needed in a democratic society to overcome social distrust. Drawing from Aristotle, Allen outlines a set of practices that are characteristic of friendship that can also be applied in the political realm. These include the acceptance of loss, reciprocating in times of need, sacrificing for the good of another, equal recognition, proving one’s trustworthiness, and shared vulnerability. Unlike friends in other social spheres, political friends don’t have to like one another to treat each other as friends, and can be strangers to one another. Moreover, being able to overcome our fear of talking to strangers, Allen writes, is critical to achieving political maturity. A fear of strangers is a product of unequal power relations in U.S. society that has kept members of the “majority” apart from the rest of the citizenry. Previously, the only real option available to minority groups was to assimilate into the cultural mainstream. Political friendship however offers the possibility of reversing this historical trend and creating social trust that bridges cultural, ethnic, racial, linguistic differences.

Each of the conceptions of citizenship highlighted above, to varying degrees, demonstrate the limitations of understanding citizenship solely in relation to the nation-state. For example,

Kymlicka's argument that immigrants, as "ethnic minorities," uproot themselves from the social practices of their homeland when they choose to migrate fails to recognize the transnational ties many immigrants retain long after migrating, or the fact that many immigrants do not "chose" to move, but are forced to do so due to war or economic insecurity, and in this respect, have not "forfeited" their right to have their cultural ties recognized in the public sphere. As some historians and scholars of transnational migration have argued, immigrating never meant a permanent rupture from immigrants' native homelands (Glick-Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 1992; Levitt, 2009; Morawska, 2001). The transnational lives of some immigrant youth, including back and forth travel between their native country and the U.S. (Sánchez, 2007), speak to the possibilities of living in multiple social fields at once. For these youth, it may be preferable to draw upon the societal culture of both their native country and the U.S., in order to access a broader set of shared values and beliefs.

The different conceptions of citizenship put forth by this group of scholars illuminates the complexity of citizenship education in multicultural societies, which are becoming increasingly diverse due to global migration. These demographic shifts suggest the need for a reconceptualization of civic education practices whose aim is to create a new civic space in which transnational immigrant youth can participate. Moreover, research agendas that set out to understand the civic needs of immigrant youth, and how schools can meet them must go beyond old conceptions. As I discuss below, current research documenting the civic achievement gap, for example by collecting data from standardized tests of political knowledge, is based on more limited conceptions of citizenship. The goal of these studies is to find ways to assimilate immigrant youth into the existing political order. Moreover, civic engagement is often defined as participation in formal political institutions, such as through voting or joining a political party.

Yet these measurements privilege the civil and political aspects of citizenship. Finally, if citizenship is conceived of a set of social practices, embodied by “political friends,” research is needed that attends more closely to how social trust is developed in educational settings. This would include how students and teachers care for one another, practice reciprocity, and work for the good of all.

Re-conceptualizing Civic Knowledge and Engagement

The latest wave of research on civic education has been fueled by concerns over a lack of civic knowledge among youth (Niemi and Junn, 1998), which according to some is contributing to a widening civic empowerment gap (Levinson, 2012). Researchers attribute low levels of civic knowledge and participation among urban youth to a lack of voluntary associations in impoverished urban communities, such as youth baseball leagues, as well as social distrust between neighbors (Hart & Atkins, 2002). These studies draw upon theories of social capital (Putnam, 1995; 2000) to explain the links between declining civic knowledge and the conditions of urban poverty (Atkins & Hart, 2003; Hart & Atkins, 2002). Putnam (1995) defines social capital as the “features of social life – networks, norms, and trust – that enable participants to act more effectively to pursue shared objectives” (p. 664-665). As Putnam points out, whether these shared objectives are for the benefit of society is another matter. However, the more that norms, networks and trust bridge social divisions in society, the more likely it is that shared objectives will not simply advantage individuals or a small segment of society. Putnam defines ties to people who are unlike oneself in some way as ‘bridging’ social capital, and ties to people who are like oneself in some way as ‘bonding’ social capital.

A possible explanation for the decline in social capital, according to Putnam, is greater ethnic diversity brought about by increased migration. In a study of social capital in 41

communities across the U.S., Putnam found that an increase in ethnic diversity led to an increase in out-group distrust. Putnam considers this evidence of “conflict theory,” which purports that under conditions of competition over scarce resources people are more likely to distrust others they perceive as being different (Putnam, 2007, p. 142). However, additional researchers have tested this hypothesis and found that other variables mediate trust in diverse settings, including the socio-economic characteristics of an area (Letki, 2008). Conditions of poverty and economic deprivation are likely to also have an effect on our attitudes toward out-groups. Feelings of insecurity or a lack of safety limit opportunities for social interaction to counteract distrust and the stereotypes we may have of other people (Stolle, Soroka & Johnston, 2008; Sturgis, Brunton-Smith, Read & Allum, 2010).

Recent polling data suggests that youth political participation may once again be on the rise (Kirby & Kawashima-Ginsberg, 2009; Lopez, Kirby, Sagoff, & Herbst, 2005). According to researchers at the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), the youth vote increased substantially in the 2004, 2008 and 2012 presidential election cycles, suggesting a new trend in youth civic engagement. The largest jump came in 2004, when voter turnout among youth aged 18-24 increased by 11 percentage points, whereas older voters increased their rate of participation by just 3 percentage points. Significantly, African American youth contributed a large share of these increases in participation. Analyses of the 2016 election are consistent with these trends in the national youth vote. Moreover, the share of young voters who were Black, Latino, Asian American, and White mirrored their representation in the general population of young citizens (CIRCLE Staff, 2016).

While these trends are certainly encouraging, contrary evidence suggests that inequalities in civic learning opportunities persist (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008; Levinson, 2012; Niemi &

Junn, 1998). Several researchers draw upon standardized tests of political knowledge in order to document the existence of a civic achievement gap. Niemi and Junn (1998) utilize data from the 1988 National Association of Educational Progress (NAEP) Civics Assessment, a multiple-choice exam that tests students on their knowledge of the basic structures of government, the rights of citizens, and political parties. Their analysis of the NAEP shows discrepancies in political knowledge among students according to race. Latino and African American students are found to lag behind their White peers by as much as 13 percentage points according to such standardized measures.

These findings have been corroborated using more recent data. Levinson (2012) cites the results of the 2010 NAEP Civics Assessment to show that White, Asian, native-born, and middle-class students continue to outperform their Black, Hispanic, and foreign-born peers. These differences in civic knowledge mirror patterns of adult civic engagement as well. Based on U.S. census data showing White, well-educated, wealthy, native-born U.S. citizens are more likely to vote and participate in other civic activities, such as contacting an elected official or performing community service related activities, Levinson argues that unequal civic learning opportunities threaten the viability of American democracy through the disengagement of people of color from the mainstream political process. Kahne and Middaugh (2008) also use large-scale survey data, including the IEA Civic Education Study (CES) to investigate a possible link between civic learning opportunities and the existence of a civic achievement gap. Unsurprisingly, Kahne and Middaugh demonstrate that students attending high socio-economic status schools receive more classroom based civic learning opportunities, including participation in debates or panel discussions in their social studies classes, learning about the legal system, and participating in community service activities.

The research reporting a civic opportunity gap applies to immigrant youth as well, given the greater racial and ethnic diversity of immigrants today, the majority of whom migrate from Asia and Latin America (Suarez-Orozco, 2001). At the same time, research is also needed that focuses specifically on how immigrant youth, who are also socio-economically diverse, make sense of these learning opportunities and civic experiences in ways that may differ from their native-born peers.

In addition, while these standardized civics assessments and large datasets offer important insights into how unequal civic learning opportunities may contribute to a civic achievement gap, they are limited in several significant ways. First, the NAEP civics assessment only gathers data on broad ethnic/racial categories, including White, Black, Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander. There is, of course, tremendous diversity within each of these ethnic/racial groups, including differences between native-born and immigrant youth. Kahne and Middaugh (2008) recognize this as a limitation of their analysis of the IEA data as well and they point out the need for a more nuanced analysis of how civic learning opportunities are taken up by the students themselves. In other work, Middaugh and Kahne explore the ways in which youth civic involvement is influenced by ethnic and class identities, and find that youth from predominantly White, high-socioeconomic status schools, are more likely to view government as effective, but believe it is unnecessary for them to get involved. Their peers in a working class, Latino community, on the other hand, while skeptical of the responsiveness of government to their needs, still believe that political engagement is necessary (Middaugh & Kahne, 2008).

Another limitation of the civic education literature is that it fails to take into account the more complex conceptions of citizenship discussed above, including citizenship as an everyday social practice, and not simply as a fixed legal status. The use of quantitative methods is based

on predetermined definitions of civic knowledge that can be measured by multiple choice tests or survey questions. However, a top-down analysis of youth civic knowledge is unable to explain the ways in which youth make meaning of their civic experiences. While knowledge of political institutions may increase the capacity of young people to become more politically involved (Levinson, 2012), measures such as the NAEP are biased in favor of the civil and political dimensions of citizenship. Other research approaches are needed, and different types of data must be collected, in order to determine the extent to which civic learning opportunities are affected by the other dimensions of citizenship.

A third weakness of the current civic education literature is that civic engagement is often narrowly defined in the literature as participation in conventional forms of action, such as voting, or joining a political party (Hart & Atkins, 2002). However, evidence suggests that these definitions of civic engagement may not reflect how younger generations of citizens are viewing the rights and responsibilities of citizenship or what constitutes a “good citizen” (Dalton, 2009). For younger Americans, the decision to vote may not be the best measure of their commitment to the common good. Drawing upon two nationally representative surveys, the General Social Survey (GSSS), and the Center for Democracy and Civil Society (CDACS) survey, Dalton (2009) identifies two dimensions of citizenship, *Citizen Duty*, and *Engaged Citizenship*. Younger generations are found to identify more closely with *Engaged Citizenship*, which considers “buying products for political reasons... and [being] willing to challenge political elites” to be important indicators of “good citizenship” (pp. 27-28). This differs from previous generations, who were more likely to align themselves with the principle of *Citizen Duty*, which places a higher priority on obeying the law, voting, and serving in the military.

Bringing much needed attention to new forms of civic participation among young people, particularly youth of color, is research on youth activism (S. Ginwright, 2007; Ginwright & James, 2002; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007; Ginwright, Noguera, & Cammarota, 2006) and youth participatory action research (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Fox et al., 2010). Unlike earlier generations, who may have believed it was their civic duty to obey authority, the youth in these studies engage civically in order to challenge the status quo and bring about greater social justice for their community. This group of scholars argue that the present focus on traditional forms of action in much of the literature on civic education, such as voting or community service, overlook important ways in which youth of color in urban communities are civically active (S. Ginwright, 2011; Watts & Flanagan, 2007). Moreover, as a context for increasing youth civic engagement, researchers of youth activism more often study the effects of community organizations, rather than schools, as places where youth learn to think critically about the root causes of civic injustice (Kirshner, 2008). Finally, in these educational spaces youth organizing is often taken as a model for encouraging civic engagement, rather than the traditional civic education curriculum.

Ginwright and Cammarota (2007), for example, describe the development of what they call “critical civic praxis” within the context of community organizations that engage youth in activist projects. Ginwright and Cammarota define “critical civic praxis” as “a process that develops critical consciousness and builds the capacity for young people to respond to oppressive conditions in their environment” (pp. 699). Working together with peers, members of the community, and adult allies, young people engaged in activism learn to see the everyday problems that affect them as political issues that require redress through civic engagement. In their study Ginwright and Cammarota document civic behaviors that are not typically captured

by social science researchers. For example, in the course of one campaign youth organized “mobile hip-hop concerts” as a means of political education for African-American youth (pp. 702). By travelling to local parks, strip malls, and street corners, organizers were able to reach segments of the youth population that had been previously neglected with their political message regarding prison sentencing guidelines for minors. By attending to the ways in which young people seek to address social injustice in their communities, research on youth activism, counteracts the stereotype of civically disengaged youth of color in urban neighborhoods.

Youth participatory action research (YPAR) is another method of research that seeks to document the civic benefits of youth activism (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Fox et al., 2010). Fox et al. (2010) argue that the supposed gaps in civic engagement are a reflection of unequal civic opportunities for young people of color living in poverty, and not due to a lack of political interest or motivation. Furthermore, they point out that in the literature, “what gets defined as an engagement activity is contoured by asymmetries in class, race, and gender” (pp. 623). Fox and colleagues present compelling examples of youth and their adult allies participating in what they call “critical youth engagement,” which includes overlapping elements of youth leadership, youth organizing, and YPAR (pp. 623). In each of the exemplary projects YPAR researchers discuss, youth are treated as knowledgeable insiders about their everyday experiences of injustice and oppression.

The relationship between young people and adults who engage in youth activism stands in stark contrast to that which underlies the political socialization model of civic education, which was more “concerned with the mechanisms underlying political stability, [and] assumed that adult agents passed on to the younger generation a set of principles that sustained the system” (Watts & Flanagan, 2007). The view of youth as immature adults, without fully formed

political theories, may serve as a significant impediment to increasing youth civic engagement in the school context. Kirshner (2008) explores the ways in which adults help young people organize their campaigns for social action through ethnographic fieldwork in three multiracial activism groups. Among his recommendations for educators who wish to promote civic engagement, Kirshner argues that providing youth with “access to mature expert civic participation practices” is crucially important. Veteran organizers, for example, can offer apprenticeships for young activists. However, rarely do schools provide youth with this form of civic preparation; more often young people are segregated from adult activities (Kirshner, 2008). Research on YPAR and activist youth organizations offers evidence of the civic benefits of engaging youth in authentic civic problems that are of relevance to them.

These differing conceptions and beliefs about citizenship, and the forms of civic engagement, may have important implications for the types of participation in which immigrant youth partake, including undocumented youth who may be old enough to vote, but not legally able (Jensen & Flanagan, 2008; Seif, 2010). While some research indicates that immigrants’ rights struggles in the U.S. may be motivating some immigrant youth to engage in traditional forms of participation, such as protests and marches (Seif, 2010), others may be active in less obvious ways. For instance, immigrant youth engagement may include being active in religious organizations, joining sports teams where English language ability is less important, or translating for immigrant parents (Stepick, Stepick, & Labissiere, 2008). For immigrant youth, working hard in school may also be a form of civic involvement, because it is a means for immigrant youth to give back to the immigrant community and honor the sacrifices others have made to provide them with better life opportunities. For instance, Valenzuela (1999) discusses how Mexican immigrant students’ beliefs about education differ from native-born youth.

According to the Mexican principle of *educación*, becoming well-educated is not a measure of individual achievement, but rather the community's successful rearing of children to become "caring, responsible, well-mannered, and respectful human beings" (Valenzuela, 1999, pp. 23). This Latino/a cultural understanding of education highlights an important civic component of immigrant youth academic achievement.

A final way in which traditional conceptions of civic engagement need to be re-evaluated is in regards to the potential role new media plays in youth civic engagement (Cohen & Kahne, 2012). A report by the Youth Participatory Politics Research Group (Cohen & Kahne, 2012) defines participatory politics as "interactive, peer-based acts through which individuals and groups seek to exert both voice and influence on issues of public concern" (p. vi). This definition of participatory politics expands what can be considered valid forms of civic engagement, including "starting a new political group online, writing and disseminating a new blog post about a political issue, forwarding a funny political video to one's social network, or participating in a poetry slam" (p. vi). The extent to which immigrant youth civic identity may be affected by these newer forms of participatory politics has not yet been explored in the research literature. However, according to a large-scale nationally representative study of new media and politics among young people between the ages of 15 and 25, youth from across all racial and ethnic groups have equal access to online activity (Cohen & Kahne, 2012). Significantly, when forms of participatory politics are taken into account alongside institutional politics and voting, Black youth are more likely to have participated than Whites, Asian Americans, and Latinos. Further research would be necessary to determine whether these findings also apply to young immigrants. Future studies could investigate the extent to which social media provide a means for immigrant youth to maintain civic attachments that transcend the borders of the nation-state.

In closing, relying on conventional measures of civic knowledge and participation reinforces a deficit-oriented approach to understanding youth civic development, by focusing on what youth do not know, rather than what they do know based on their everyday civic experiences. This deficit-oriented approach has been extended to studies of how family and adults, schools, and community institutions affect the civic development of youth (Atkins & Hart, 2003; Hart & Atkins, 2002). In their comparison of two community contexts, one a small, poor city, the other a nearby affluent suburb, Hart and Atkins identify several ways in which young people living in urban neighborhoods are at a civic disadvantage due to low levels of social capital. These include fewer adults who can serve as models of good citizenship because of low voter turnout, and a low ratio of adults to children. Fewer adults means not enough people to form and organize youth activities, such as little league baseball, or 4H clubs.

However, Ginwright (2007) argues that these traditional notions of social capital are insufficient to explain new forms of social capital that have emerged in response to the scaling back of basic social services, as well as conditions of poverty, violence, and crime in urban communities. Ginwright argues that Black community organizations play a crucially important role in developing what he refers to as “critical social capital.” Critical social capital challenges the deficit oriented view of Black youth as civic problems, rather than civic actors. It also promotes activism among Black youth by helping them to view the personal challenges they encounter, such as “harassment by police, shame for substance-abusing parents, and anger for not having a father in their lives,” as political problems that can be solved through collective action (pp. 407). By refocusing attention on what young people do know about politics, rather than what they do not, and by attending to the ways in which youth choose to engage in a political sphere more broadly defined, a different picture of youth civic engagement is possible.

This may also be true of immigrant youth who view their personal and family struggles with immigration, such as access to higher education for undocumented immigrants, or fear of a parent being deported, as political problems that can be addressed in the civic arena. Research that has been conducted on the social capital of immigrant and minority youth has tended to focus on its value in promoting academic success (Bartlett & García, 2011; Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Valenzuela, 1999), rather than civic engagement. Converting social capital into academic success is of course critical to social mobility and being politically active, such as by voting. However, social capital, particularly of the ‘bridging’ type that builds social trust across difference, may also be necessary to overcoming the deep political divisions and civic exclusions in U.S. society today.

Transnationalism and Place

Not only has global migration led to a more diverse student population, it has made it easier for immigrant youth to cultivate transnational civic attachments (Abu El-Haj, 2007; Knight, 2011; Knight & Watson, 2014; Levitt, 2009; Levitt & Waters, 2002; Sánchez, 2007). Whether or not transnationalism is entirely a new phenomenon associated with globalization, or characteristic of past generations of immigrants, is a subject of historical debate (Morawska, 2001). The fact that, between 1908 and 1924, one-third of immigrants to America switched allegiances and returned to their home countries suggests that for the last great wave of immigrants to the United States, one-way migration was never a foregone conclusion (Rothstein, 1998). European immigrants maintained transnational attachments with family and friends in their former villages in numerous ways, such as by keeping abreast of political developments back home and closely monitoring family affairs through return visits and written communication, reading the immigrant press, and sending remittances (Morawska, 2001).

Glick-Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton (1992) define transnationalism as “the process by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement” (p. 1). Levitt and Glick-Schiller (2004) elaborate on the concept “social field,” which they use to describe “a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized and transformed” (pp. 1009). Moreover, social fields are not necessarily contiguous with the boundaries of nation-states. The concept of a social field in the transnational migration literature helps explain how immigrant youth could maintain social relationships across national borders, which link those who have migrated with those who stay behind in the native country (Levitt & Glick-Schiller, 2004). For instance, immigrants may maintain transnational ties in a variety of ways, including actual travel to and from the native country, or through communication networks. However, immigrant youth may occupy a social field that is inclusive of both their adopted country and their ancestral home without ever physically traveling there, by maintaining symbolic ties, or by imagining their return to their homeland (Espiritu & Tran, 2002).

Participating in a transnational social field may also allow immigrant youth to adopt a dual frame of reference to evaluate their educational experiences here in the United States. This was true of Dominican college-going youth in one study (Louie, 2006b), who often compared their schooling in the U.S. to the educational opportunities that had been available to them in the Dominican Republic. Their awareness of the poor conditions of schools in the Dominican Republic allowed them to maintain an optimistic outlook on their prospects for upward social mobility in the U.S., despite the challenges they faced. This dual frame of reference was reinforced by frequent family visits to the Dominican Republic. This study illustrates how belonging to a transnational social field is not necessarily at odds with civic integration into the

receiving country. In this case, Dominican youth were more likely to persevere in school, and consequently achieve higher levels of education and economic success in the U.S. as a result of their continuing ties to their native country.

It follows that the civic identity of immigrant youth may also be enriched by their transnational ties. This was the case for a group of young Latina women participating in a study by Sánchez (2007), who made trips to rural and semi-rural Mexico every year. These visits provided the young Latina women with transnational funds of knowledge that contributed to their cultural flexibility (Sanchez, 2007). While visiting family in rural Mexico the young Latinas took part in rituals of work that were characteristic of their parents' cultural upbringing in rural Mexico. In performing these tasks, they gained greater cultural and social awareness, and were "exposed to different ideas of citizen rights and responsibilities" (Levitt & Glick-Schiller, p. 1025-1026). Although schools have reacted to the back-and-forth movement of immigrant youth in states like California, where ancestral visits have a measurable effect on attendance rates, by adjusting the school calendar, pedagogical practices rarely take into account the cultural resources transnational youth bring to the classroom, and teachers remain largely unaware of this social aspect of students' lives (Sanchez, 2007). A spate of recent studies in the field of social studies education has turned necessary attention to the successful pedagogical practices of teachers of immigrant youth (Bondy, 2015; Dabach & Fones, 2016; Hilburn, 2015), including 'newcomers,' who arrive in the U.S. after having already completed much of their education in the home country (Salinas 2006; Taylor-Jaffee, 2015). This growing literature demonstrates the importance of building on upon immigrant youths' cultural, linguistic and transnational civic assets in the social studies curriculum.

Research on transnationalism in the field of migration studies also raises questions about the different forms transnational political ties might take. Dominican adults living in New York again serve as an example. In the late 1990s, Dominicans who had immigrated to the United States amassed considerable political clout due to their contribution of remittances to the Dominican Republic (Suarez-Orozco, 2001). As a result, the Dominican Republic modified its constitution in order to give voting rights to Dominicans living outside the country (Bartlett & Garcia, 2011). Immigrant parents who are engaging in this form of direct political involvement in their native country may serve as civic role models for Dominican youth in ways currently unaccounted for in the literature on civic engagement. On the other hand, Afro-Caribbean immigrants to New York City show a somewhat different pattern of civic involvement based on their transnational ties (Rogers, 2006). The respondents in a study by Rogers (2006) maintain a hope of return to their native country, despite having achieved educational and economic success in America. Rogers finds that this emotional longing for home reduces the likelihood that Afro-Caribbean immigrants will become naturalized citizens and engage in the political process. At the same time, those in the study who engaged in civic activities in the home country as a form of transnationalism were more likely to be active in America as well. The effects of transnational ties on the civic identity of immigrant youth therefore are likely to be complex and multifaceted.

Several studies investigate how immigrant youth use a transnational perspective to make meaning of their civic experiences in the U.S. For example, one study explored how Palestinian American understandings of citizenship were influenced by a transnational outlook following the terrorist attacks on 9/11 (Abu El-Haj, 2007). These students experienced discrimination from teachers and fellow students and were scrutinized as possible terrorist suspects. In response to this school context, the students drew upon multiple sources of belonging to forge a civic

identity. Many students maintained ties to family in Palestine, through the sending of remittances, by living in Palestine for periods of time, or by observing Palestinian cultural traditions while living in America. The majority of students claimed to *be* Palestinian and derived a sense of national belonging from their cultural upbringing, as well as by participating in the struggle for a Palestinian state.

At the same time, these youth, some of whom were American citizens, recognized the value of their citizenship status, which conferred upon them certain legal and social rights, such as the right to an education, the future ability to vote in America, and to travel freely to Palestine. Therefore, although they felt denied a sense of national belonging in America due to the racism they faced in school, the students exercised their rights to citizenship by contesting disciplinary actions taken against them at school, exercising their freedom of speech in class, and by making films that challenged stereotypes of Palestinians as dangerous immigrants. This research draws attention to the ways in which these immigrant youths exercise agency in the face of exclusionary practices by “uncoupling [their] national and citizenship identities” (Abu El Haj, 2007, pp. 296). The research participants demonstrate that they have agency, and are capable of exercising flexible forms of identity in response to exclusion.

Studies of civically engaged transnational youth challenge the deficit-based perspective of youth civic engagement (Knight, 2011). For example, Kwame, the subject of a study by Knight (2011), is a civically engaged Ghanaian American who forges a hybrid civic identity. Kwame lived in Ghana with his grandmother until he was 10-years-old, after which time he immigrated to America to live with his mother and father. Like the Palestinian American students in Abu El-Haj’s study, Kwame draws upon multiple sources of belonging in order to negotiate a civic identity. As Kwame explains,

“I owe a great debt to Ghana and to the United States. To Ghana, for obviously giving birth to me, giving me life essentially, and shaping my worldview... And the U.S., for kind of like refurbishing and polishing that worldview and giving me many opportunities that I maybe wouldn't have gotten had I lived in Ghana” (pp. 1280).

This quote illustrates the different aspects of a civic identity Kwame constructs for himself. While drawing upon his upbringing in Ghana as the source of his cultural identity, he also acknowledges the social rights and opportunities his American citizenship affords him. In doing so, Kwame develops a hybrid, or transnational, identity that fuels his civic engagement. This civic engagement takes several forms, including his participation in the Model United Nations program, and a youth conference on homelessness and AIDS. In addition to feeling a sense of belonging in America and Ghana, Kwame also uses digital media to communicate with immigrant friends about their excitement about the election of President Barak Obama, and participate in a global civic community.

An important distinction that can be drawn between how Kwame forms a civic identity and the Palestinian American students in Abu El Haj's study is that whereas Kwame constructs a hybrid identity that is inclusive of both his Ghanaian and American self, the Palestinian American students feel they must decouple their sense of national belonging in the U.S. from their legal rights as U.S. citizens. Kwame on the other hand derives a sense of belonging from Ghana, the U.S., and the global community, which he experiences as mutually supportive. A difference between the experiences of these two immigrant groups, which may influence how they each construct a civic identity, is the degree to which they are subject to exclusionary discourses. Whereas the Palestinian American students report facing discrimination and

prejudice on an almost daily basis, Kwame does not speak at all about the effects of negative stereotypes of immigrants on his identity.

Family is yet another context in which transnational ties can be expressed. In a study conducted by Knight and Watson (2014), it was in the context of social obligations to family that African immigrant youth developed a civic identity. These young people engage in what Knight and Watson refer to as “participatory communal citizenship.” In contrast with the civic engagement literature, which prioritizes singular activities, such as voting, or performing community service, for the respondents in this study, being civically active frequently takes place “across lifetime events and geographic locations” (pp. 545). One study participant, Lisa, refers to this as “Sankofa,” which translated into English means, “to look or to reach back.” In this case, Lisa looks or reaches back to her ancestors and family still living in Ghana to do what she can to give back to her community as a form “participatory communal citizenship.” Similar notions of engagement emerge for another participant, Tinda, who expresses the family imperative to “do good things” as a form of communal civic action. While this involves sending money back home to relatives, it may also include “social remittances,” such as ideas, norms, practices and identities that influence the lives of immigrants, as well as non-migrants (Levitt, 2011). For second generation African immigrant youth, the context of family, as well African culture, may inform and contribute to their civic identity.

Citizenship, Identity, and Belonging

A final area of civic education research shifts attention from analyses of civic knowledge and engagement, and instead towards explaining how ‘civic identity’ develops in particular sociocultural contexts (Rubin, 2007; Rubin, Hayes, & Benson, 2009). The concept of civic identity has been employed primarily in the field of developmental psychology to explain why it

is that young people who engage in certain pro-social activities during adolescence, such as community service, become more civically engaged adults (Youniss et al., 1997). Youniss and colleagues hypothesize that youth participation in organized clubs and activities, such as 4-H, lead to greater civic engagement in adulthood, because “participation promotes the inclusion of a civic character into the construction of identity” (pp. 624). It is also significant that youth participate in such groups during adolescence, a sensitive period for youth identity formation.

Flanagan (2013) also considers adolescence to be a critical time for the development of a civic identity. Her use of the term “mini-polities,” to describe schools, community-based organizations, extracurricular activities, and other clubs, highlights the important role they play in teaching students “about their membership, rights, and obligations as citizens in the broader polity” (p. 18). Schools serve as mediating institutions, through which students not only acquire political knowledge, but also develop affective ties to peers, teachers, their school, and to the broader civic community. For instance, one study indicated that when students perceive their teachers to be fair, caring and inclusive towards students, they are more likely to commit to civic goals, including “serving their country, improving race relations, and helping people in need” (Flanagan, Cumsille, Gill & Gallay, 2007, p. 429). This was found to be especially true for ethnic minority students.

However, schools do not operate independent of the broader societal context. A study of youth civic identity by Rubin and Hayes (2010) considered how the different civic experiences of students living in urban versus suburban environments affected their understandings of themselves as citizens. Based on their lived experience, students in the study either did, or did not, view civic institutions as benefiting them. The students attending urban schools experienced a disjuncture between the civic ideals emphasized in their history textbooks and their own

experiences with school and the police, which in turn led them to feel discouraged about the possibility of social change. Suburban students, on the other hand, expressed congruence between their interactions with civic institutions and the civic ideals of liberty and justice, and adopted more empowered and active civic identities (p. 355). When implementing an action civics curriculum in each of the school contexts, teachers found that students' prior experiences with civic institutions influenced their selection of problems to solve in their community, their attitudes towards social change, and feelings of self-efficacy.

These studies highlight the fact that the same civic learning opportunities will not be experienced in the same way by all students. However, current research has not adequately considered the diversity of ways in which immigrant youth make sense of their civic experiences. While it is true that immigrant students due to their perceived race may share many of the same civic experiences as native-born youth of color, researchers should treat immigrant students as a distinct group to uncover the specific social processes that influence how foreign-born youth develop a civic identity.

Moreover, important differences exist within the category of immigrant youth. Whether a young immigrant is a member of the first or second generation, what country or political context she migrates from, or if she or her parents are undocumented, are all likely to impact her civic identity and feeling of belonging in the United States (Seif, 2010). While some immigrant students may hope to integrate themselves into the mainstream political culture, others may view themselves as members of diaspora communities who will one day return to their country of birth (Lukose, 2007), while still others may struggle to maintain hybrid identities (Knight, 2011) or transnational attachments to more than one nation state (Abu El-Haj, 2007).

Sense of belonging either in the home country or the host society of the U.S. is also effected by the political projects of nation-states (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Yuval-Davis outlines three different levels at which belonging can be analyzed: (1) social locations, (2) identifications and emotional attachments, and (3) ethical and political values. According to Yuval-Davis, what it means to belong can become politicized during specific historical moments, and nation-states can establish criteria of belonging at any of these different levels accordingly. At the level of social location, for example, being black is a social location that “has particular implications *vis-à-vis* the grids of power relations in society” (p. 199). Throughout much of U.S. history black citizens, even after being legally recognized as citizens with particular rights and responsibilities, have been placed outside the boundaries of the political community of belonging. Following the events of September 11, 2001, showing allegiance to America by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance became a criterion for belonging enacted in schools at the level of identifications and emotional attachments (Abu El-Haj, 2007). A failure to do so could disqualify you from belonging and call into question your status as a citizen. According to a politics of belonging, therefore, schools may discourage or prevent immigrants from maintaining transnational ties to their home countries, further impacting their civic identities and engagements.

Chapter Summary

Based on a synthesis and analysis of the literature, several conclusions can be drawn about the role of civic belonging. Schools serve as important mediating institutions which shape the civic identity of all young people, immigrant and native-born alike (Flanagan, 2013; Flanagan, Stoppa, Syvertsen, Stout, 2010; Youniss et al., 1997). When students learn in classrooms where respectful discussions about political issues are encouraged (Torney-Purta, 2002), have service-learning experiences (Youniss & Yates, 1997), are given a voice in the

school community, and allowed to study topics that matter to them, they become more committed to civic participation (Kahne & Middaugh, 2010). Beyond these curricular experiences, youth who form caring and trusting relationships with teachers are also more likely to endorse civic goals (Flanagan, et al., 2007). The fact that these types of learning opportunities are more often available to White, wealthier, suburban students (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008; Levinson, 2012) is a cause for civic concern.

While immigrant youth may be more likely to attend urban schools where civic preparation is inadequate, an important direction for future research is to focus on the specific experiences of immigrant youth in order to determine how they are affected by such civic inequalities. Research has already shown that students from different socioeconomic backgrounds will experience the same civic learning opportunities differently (Middaugh & Kahne, 2008; Rubin, 2007). Students are not mere empty vessels to be filled, nor can they be molded into exemplary citizens; their social, cultural, and historical positioning has relevance for how they will make meaning of the school curriculum (Rubin & Hayes, 2010).

This review of the literature also points toward the potential influence of transnational ties on immigrant civic identity. While much of civic education in schools continues to treat the nation-state as the only relevant context for the development of a civic identity, the experiences of many immigrant youth belie this assumption. Some immigrant youth maintain a complex set of civic attachments, and sources of civic and national belonging (Abu El-Haj, 2007; Knight, 2011). The source, direction, and strength of these associations are mediated by a host of factors and processes that include, but are not limited to, reasons for migrating, proximity to and the ability to visit the home country, maintenance of the native language at home and in school, the existence of formal political ties to the native country, and age at the time of immigration (Louie,

2006a; Seif, 2010). An important area for future research is to explore the impact of these transnational ties, including transnational networks of communication and belonging, on young immigrant youth civic identity.

Critical for future researchers to consider is also the effect of exclusionary, nationalistic discourses that position some immigrant youth outside the boundaries of U.S. citizenship (Abu El-Haj & Bonet, 2010). The ways in which immigrants are made into subjects is also tied to larger nation-building projects being resurrected by the current presidential administration, including U.S. imperialism around the globe (Ong, 1999; Maira, 2004).

A final overarching conclusion that can be drawn from a review of the literature is the need for more attention to youth perspectives. This requires the use of new methodological approaches that move beyond large-scale, quantitative and survey data, which is the norm in the current literature. Ethnographic approaches would also help illuminate the meaning-making processes by which immigrant youth develop a civic identity (Levinson, 2005). In the next chapter I discuss my use of a critical visual methodology (Rose, 2013), in combination with other qualitative methods, in order to capture the full range of civic actions immigrant youth engage in, rather than relying on predetermined measures of civic knowledge and engagement.

Chapter 3 – METHODOLOGY

In this dissertation, I investigate how immigrant youth construct civic belonging across the contexts of school, neighborhood and home, and how their sense of belonging informs their civic identities. In order to understand how the immigrant youth in this study make meaning of their experiences of belonging, youth participants were positioned as competent social actors and valuable contributors to the accumulation of new knowledge (James, 2007). Borrowing from interpretive (Greene, 2010) and constructivist (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) paradigms, this dissertation study rests on the assumption that scientific knowledge is constructed in specific contexts and is “place-bound, pluralistic, divergent, even conflictual” (Greene, p. 68). New knowledge that is generated must be grounded in the perspectives and experiences of those being studied. Moreover, interpretivist knowledge is not generalizable to all settings, but rather depends on internal coherence and consistency. Research methods were selected for this study in order to generate thick description of the research setting, the social context, and the standpoint of participants (Haraway, 1991).

More specifically, this dissertation study combines a critical visual methodology (Rose, 2012) with other qualitative methods, including ethnographic interviews (Spradley, 1979), and focus groups (Madriz, 1998). Rose (2012) outlines several criteria for a critical visual methodology. Briefly summarized, these include careful attention to the content and context of images; consideration of the social effects of images to include and exclude, and impart cultural meanings; and use of reflexivity to think about how images are viewed by different audiences (p. 16-17). Photo-elicitation was used as one method of exploring participants’ civic experiences, which can be described as simply as “inserting a photograph in a research interview” (Harper,

2002). The youth in this study were asked to take photographs, which were then discussed in interviews. Giving youth cameras, and asking them to photograph aspects of their lives, has become an increasingly popular research method in the social sciences (Luttrell, 2010). Underlying such participatory visual methods is an epistemological commitment to positioning youth as knowledgeable about their own social worlds, in order to gain a more complete understanding of their experiences. Most proponents of participatory visual methods argue that they allow those who are silenced in society greater voice (James, 2007). Photo-elicitation, as a research method, invites participants to take a more active role in the research agenda, by creating a space for researchers to work *with* youth, rather than treating them as *objects* of study. This includes creating a more open conversation between the researcher and participants. Some visual research methods, such as photovoice (Wang, 1999), have the explicit aim of recording and representing participants' concerns and issues, and transferring power to them in order to influence policy, or improve social conditions.

My use of photo-elicitation in this study shares several of these aims, notably the treatment of youth participants as articulate social actors. However, I do not wish to overstate the degree to which photo-elicitation empowers, or gives voice, to research participants (Luttrell 2010; Piper & Frankham, 2007; James, 2007). I do not believe that giving my participants cameras to photograph aspects of their lives afforded me a more privileged vantage point on their experiences, or that the process of taking photos necessarily gave them greater agency. However, the rationale for using a critical visual methodology includes enabling participants to express themselves in alternative formats, including creative self-expression, other than through verbal communication alone (Gauntlett & Holzwarth, 2006).

Buckingham (2009) challenges what he regards as “a form of naïve empiricism” characteristic of visual research projects that treat photos as objective documentation of reality, rather than constructions that must be viewed from within the social contexts they are produced and circulated (p. 635). Following Luttrell (2010), this study is based on the theoretical “premise that there are multiple layers of meaning in any single photograph and that children have intentions and make deliberate choices (albeit prescribed) to represent themselves and others...” (p. 224). The choices youth participants make about their self-representations are shaped by a host of factors, including their understanding of the purposes of the research project itself, their relationship with the researcher, and the other participants in the project, and the broader cultural contexts of production. In other words, giving youth cameras does not ensure that they will have complete control over what to photograph. Clark-Ibáñez (2004), cautions for example, that “family dynamics of power and authority may affect the child’s ability to take his or her own photographs.” Peer relationships may exert a strong influence over what students are able to photograph, as well as how they choose to use photography outside the context of the research project (Chalfen, 1998). In these respects, the need for self-reflexivity applies to critical visual methodologies just as it does to other forms qualitative research, including writing ethnographic accounts, or conducting interviews.

Ethnographic interviews (Spradley, 1979) were used in order to better understand the individual lived experience of participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2006), and explore the range and diversity of their civic experiences. In pilot interviews for this dissertation study, the ethnographic interview format was a fruitful means of learning about the context in which the youth made meaning of their civic experiences. For instance, school was described as a place

where participants felt they belonged, while they experienced a lack of social trust with their neighbors in the communities where they lived.

Research Context

School Context

The youth participants for the study were recruited from two different high schools that were part of a network of public schools, Internationals Collaborative², that specifically serve immigrant youth. I chose to recruit participants from these two schools due to the unique approach they take to meeting the needs of immigrant youth. In order to attend either school students had to be designated English Language Learners (ELLs) by the New York City Department of Education and have four or fewer years of schooling in the United States at the time of enrollment. All schools in the Collaborative were organized around five core principles. These included: (1) heterogeneity and collaboration; (2) experiential learning; (3) language and content integration; (4) localized autonomy and responsibility; and (5) one learning model for all (Internationals Network for Public Schools, n.d.). Attending a school with all immigrant youth could have a significant effect on students' sense of belonging. Prior research indicates that separating late arrival-immigrant youth into different schools, or tracks within schools, can have mixed results. In some cases, isolating immigrant youth from their native-born peers can increase social divisions, make it harder for them to acquire English, and integrate into civil society (Feinberg, 2000; Olsen, 2001). On the other hand, schools that attend to the specific needs of immigrant youth may provide a welcoming space in which being transnational is normalized, and where their identities as immigrant youth taking advantage of educational opportunities are

² All names of schools and participants used in this study are pseudonyms.

supported (Fine, Futch & Stoudt, 2005; Fine, Jaffe-Walter, Pedraza, Futch & Stoudt, 2007; Michael, A., Andrade, N., & Bartlett, L., 2007).

At the time of the study, International Academy had also recently joined the New York Performance Standards Consortium. As a Consortium school, International Academy had become exempt from the New York State Regents graduation requirements. Students at the 28 Consortium schools completed a portfolio-based assessment in order to graduate. Almost twice as many ELLs graduate in four years from Consortium schools than other New York City public high schools (Barlowe & Cooke, 2016). Not having to prepare students for the high-stakes exit exam may have given teachers at International Academy greater latitude in developing a curriculum that met the needs of immigrant youth. Recruiting participants from this school allowed me to consider what effect a curriculum focused on the needs of immigrant youth may have on their sense of belonging.

In addition, International Academy was designated a transfer school by the New York City Department of Education. Transfer schools target students who may have fallen behind in their coursework, or dropped out of school. For this reason, students at transfer schools are typically older than traditional high school students. Late-arrival immigrant youth fall into this category of students if they have experienced some interruption in their schooling, either in their native country, or after immigrating to the United States. These students may also be labeled Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE). SIFE is a sub-group of ELLs who have a gap of at least 2 years in formal schooling. Students who are categorized as SIFE may have migrated to New York City in order to escape economic or political persecution, or natural disaster (NYC Department of Education, 2013). After arriving in the United States, these students may find themselves having to repeat several grades because they are unable to transfer

credits from their home country school, require additional time to learn English, or meet New York State Regents graduation requirements. A pilot study at International Academy found that being designated a transfer school made it a welcoming place for late-arrival immigrants who had been turned away from other schools due to their age. International Academy was able to create a support network that encouraged students to stay in school, including opportunities to take college courses for credit, or take part in paid internships.

An additional rationale for recruiting students from International Academy was to consider the experiences of late-arrival immigrants. Late-arrivals have completed the majority of their secondary education in their native country, and bring with them a diversity of experiences of schooling, economic systems and culture (Salinas, 2006; Salinas, Fránquiz & Reidel, 2008). They are also often old enough to engage in adult forms of civic participation, such as voting, and have already acquired a wealth of civic experiences either through economic activities or the process of migration (Knight, 2011; Salinas, 2006). Late-arrivals face the additional challenge of becoming fluent in academic English in order to pass high-stakes standardized exams necessary to graduate high school. This variety of civic experiences may have a significant impact on their understandings of belonging.

International Academy and Community High School had comparable student populations. At both schools, about 74% of students are Latino, the majority of whom were from the Dominican Republic. Blacks (African and Haitian) made up a slightly larger percentage of the population at Community High School (18%), than International Academy (13%), while Asian youth made up 5% of Community High School students, and 13% of International Academy students. White (European) students made up a small percentage at both schools (3% or fewer). According to a pilot study conducted at International Academy, Dominican youths

sense of belonging was affected by the fact that, as Latinos, they were in the majority of students. Immigrant youth of other backgrounds were included in the dissertation in order to better understand the experiences of students who were in the ethnic minority.

Research participants

The participants in this study were a purposeful sample (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) of 10 immigrant youth (see Table 1). Students’ home countries included the Dominican Republic, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea, Bangladesh and Yemen. A larger percentage of Black (African) students were represented in the study’s sample (50%) than in the school population of either school (13-18%). Likewise, the percentage of Latino/a students was smaller in the study’s sample (20%) than in the school population (75%). The rationale for oversampling students from African countries, and not including more Latino/a students, was to be able explore all the possible ways civic belonging was established by different immigrant groups.

Dominican youth were specifically invited to participate for several reasons. First, they constitute the second largest Latino group attending New York City public schools, and represent the largest share of all foreign-born students (16%). Second, more Dominican youth are designated English Language Learners (ELLs) by the New York City Department of Education than any other foreign-born group, totaling almost 23,000 students, or 31% of all ELLs (NYC Department of Education, 2013). Finally, 75% of New York City public school students who are categorized as SIFE are Dominican.

Table 1: <i>Participants</i>				
Name	Age	Country of Birth	Native Language	Biographical Notes
Assiatou	17	Guinea	Fulani	Assiatou moved the U.S. with her mother when she was 14. She lives with her mother and her father in the Bronx.

Bakary	19	The United States	Soninke, Mandinka, Wolof	Bakary moved to The Gambia when he was 3. He and his older brother moved back to the U.S. when he was 16. He and his brother lived with an uncle for a while, but they now share their own apartment. Both parents live in The Gambia.
Sembene	17	United States	Soninke	Sembene was born in the U.S. At the age of 8 his parents sent him to live in Senegal with his grandmother. He stayed in Senegal until he was 15. He now lives with both parents and a little brother.
Jennifer	17	Dominican Republic	Spanish	Jennifer came to the U.S. with her mother and two brothers when she was 10. Her father stayed in the D.R. She now lives with her mother, two brothers, and her grandmother. Her father now lives in New York too.
Nicole	17	Dominican Republic	Spanish	Nicole, her mother, and her older sister moved to New York when she was 10. She lives with her mother, grandparents, and cousin. Her sister is away at college. Nicole also has an older sister and younger brother that are half siblings. Her father lives in Florida.
MD	20	Bangladesh	Bangla	MD moved to the Bronx with his parents and older brother when he was 20. His family waited 11 years for a visa.
Amadou	17	Guinea	Mandinka	Amadou came to the U.S. with his brother when he was 14. He lives with his paternal aunt and his father, who has been in the U.S. for 20 years. His older sisters and mother still live in Guinea.
Yasser	17	Yemen	Arabic	Yasser came to the U.S. when he was 14 with his mother, older sister, and younger brother. His father was living in the U.S. for over 30 years. Yasser and Sophia are siblings.

Sophia	19	Yemen	Arabic	Sophia came to the U.S. when she was 16. She is Yasser's sister.
Kadija	17	Senegal	French, Wolof,	Kadija came to the U.S. to live with her mother when she was 15. She lives with her mother, brother, and sister. Her father still lives in Senegal.

In addition to Dominican youth, students of other immigrant backgrounds were selected in order to explore the variety and strength of transnational ties, and their effects on belonging. Previous research (Guarnizo, 2001; Louie, 2006a; Levitt & Waters, 2002; Sánchez, 2007) suggests that transnational ties may be affected by a variety of factors, including opportunities to travel to the home country. Dominican students, for instance, may be more likely to spend school holidays visiting relatives in the Dominican Republic than students from Bangladesh or Senegal, for whom travel to their home country may be prohibitively expensive. Refugees who have migrated in order to escape conflict in their native country may not have the option of returning. At the same time, it is also possible that transnational ties can be maintained across geographic space and time (Knight & Watson, 2014). The spread of global media may facilitate communication between immigrant youth and family in their home countries in ways that do not depend on physical travel.

Including Senegalese, Guinean, Gambian, Bangladeshi, and Yemeni immigrant youth in the sample also allowed me to compare the ways in which immigrant youth draw upon religion as a source of identity (Levitt, 2009b). All participants in the study, with the exception of the Dominican youth, identified as Muslim. During the period of data collection, terror attacks took place in Paris, France, and San Bernardino, CA, which spurred worldwide media attention to global terrorism. Data collection also coincided with the 2016 presidential primary election, in which leading presidential candidates called for a ban on all Muslim immigrants to America.

These events made the discussion of religion a salient topic of discussion in interviews and focus groups. The inclusion of Muslim youth from different geographic regions made it possible to focus specifically on religious identity, and the impact of media portrayals of Muslim youth as possible terrorist suspects on their sense of belonging. Finally, African immigrant youth were selected for the study because while Latino immigrants have received a fair amount of attention in the literature, African youth transnationalism is less understood (Knight & Watson, 2014). In addition to youth from different immigrant backgrounds, the sample includes a diversity of participants according to gender, socioeconomic status, and migration history. Students in the sample were between 17-22 years old. This age group of students was selected as the focus of the study because adolescence is a critical period in youth identity development (Erikson, 1968; Flanagan, 2013).

Data Collection

In this dissertation study, I gathered data from five different sources: (1) relational maps; (2) semi-structured individual interviews; (3) photo-elicitation interviews; (4) focus group meetings; (5) participants' photographs.

Semi-structured individual interviews

The purpose of conducting semi-structured interviews was to ascertain the extent to which my participants maintained transnational ties, and what these ties meant to the them. Interviews were a means of “understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (Seidman, 2006, p. 9; see also Van Manen, 1990). The interview setting allowed my participants to discuss their experiences as immigrant youth, and how those experiences informed their sense of belonging. In the interviews, I elicited their views on the relationships between feelings of belonging, and/or not belonging, and their transnational ties.

Interviews were “ethnographic” (Spradley, 1979) and used a semi-structured format (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) in order to provide the space for my participants to talk about topics that were of significance to them. This format was necessary in order to consider a broad range of experiences shaping immigrant youth civic identity. Each interview either took place at the school site, or at a nearby university, and lasted approximately 40-50 minutes.

I conducted two semi-structured individual interviews with each participant. The focus of the first interview was to learn how they saw themselves in the world in the context of their migration experiences. Other topics explored in the first interview related to participants’ migration histories, such as reasons for migrating, age at the time of migrating, and who they migrated with. The focus of the second interview was based on the first, and provided an opportunity to gather further details on the lived experiences of my participants. As a White, male, monolingual English speaker, I was positioned as an outsider to the cultural community of my participants. Therefore, a rationale for conducting multiple interviews with each student was to work towards developing a more trusting relationship with my participants. One of the ways I did this was by adopting a more conversational tone in the first interview. In pilot interviews, using this format enabled me to ask more open-ended questions in the first interview, knowing that I could ask necessary follow-up questions in the second. I also discovered that my participants showed fewer signs of nervousness in the second interview after we had begun establishing a rapport together.

Relational Maps

I began the first interview by asking my participants to draw a relational map (Bagnoli, 2009). They drew themselves in the center of the map, and then other people who were important in their lives. The more important the person was, the closer they were drawn to the center of the

map. The purpose of the relational map was twofold: to begin the interview process in a way that would open up different avenues for discussion, and to learn about social relationships as a possible source of belonging and transnational ties, and how they contributed to participants' sense of place. At the start of the second interview, I asked participants to return to their relational map and add places that were important to them. Because these were relational maps, they could show a close relationship to people and places by drawing them nearer to the center of the map, even when those people and/or places were far away, geographically speaking.

Photo-elicitation interviews

Photo-elicitation was used to trigger discussion of topics of interest to the participants that may not have arisen in the semi-structured interviews. Students were given digital cameras to photograph aspects of their everyday lives as immigrant youth. Although the majority of participants owned their own cell phones with cameras, I decided to use digital cameras in order to ensure the confidentiality of people in the photos, as I could not control what might happen to the photos after they had been taken (i.e. posted to Facebook, Instagram, etc.) In some cases, students also took photos of a photo from their cellphone. Before giving participants their camera, I met with them individually to discuss safe and ethical use of photography, usually at the conclusion of the second interview. For example, students were advised not to go anywhere unsafe in order to take a photograph, and to always ask permission before taking a person's photograph. I also gave the youth the following prompt to guide their photography: *Imagine you have a cousin from your home country who is coming to live in New York. Take pictures to show him or her the places you think are important in your school, neighborhood and family.* The prompt was designed to position the participants as knowledgeable insiders with respect to their own experiences and knowledge as immigrant youth. The students and I then brainstormed ideas

of what they might photograph, sometimes including places that were discussed in the first two interviews. These included, (1) places where you feel like you belong; (2) places where you feel respected; (3) things that show your community; (4) things that make you feel proud; (5) things about your community that concern you. I then scheduled a third interview to review the photographs with each participant, which took place, on average, 1-2 weeks later. I selected this time span in order to allow sufficient time for the students to take their photos, while not allowing so much time that they might lose focus, or forget later why they took particular photos (Rose, 2012). In several cases students asked for more time due to their busy schedules, or because they wished to photograph particular subjects that were time-sensitive. Occasionally meetings had to be re-scheduled due to work or family obligations, school projects and testing, or illness, therefore extending the time they were given to take their photos.

Photographs carry many different layers of meaning, and therefore can evoke a variety of different responses from participants. During the third interview photographs were used to elicit not just more information, but new and unique insights (Rose, 2012; Darbyshire, MacDougal & Schiller, 2005). In a study by Clark-Ibáñez (2004), for example, a participant's photos of her cat evoked a lengthy conversation about what it meant to her to move to a new community as a result of migration, a topic which may not have surfaced in a standard interview format. As this example demonstrates, photo-elicitation is a means of exploring unanticipated topics of significance to participants. Even in a semi-structured interview format, as was also used in this study, the questions researchers ask are guided by their preconceptions and theoretical assumptions. During the photo-elicitation interview I asked open-ended questions about each photograph, including "Tell me why you took this photo?" or "What does this photo show?", allowing me to pursue unplanned topics that emerged from their photos (Luttrell, 2010). The

photo-elicitation interview was a necessary means for me to distinguish between the meaning contained in the photo's content, and what the photographer wished to show with his or her photo. Banks (2001) uses the terms "internal narrative" to refer to "the content of an image," and "external narrative" to describe "the narrative the image-maker wishes to communicate" (p. 11).

As a research method, photo-elicitation is also useful in developing grounded theory, as was the aim in this study. Asking students to document aspects of their everyday lives, which may not get discussed in an interview context, provided evidence of community, neighborhood and home spaces that would have been difficult for me to access through other data gathering methods. Moreover, this study seeks to fill a gap in the literature by recognizing that "young people already participate in social life and that their lives are always already implicated in the wider social, economic, cultural and political order" (Biesta et al., 2009, p. 7). Elicitation interviews are useful in exploring these taken-for-granted understandings youth have of the routine places in their lives, because it allows them to reflect on the meaning of these places from a distance (Rose, 2012). In his photo-elicitation work, Harper (2002) used his own photos of the community to guide interviews. He found that the photos which proved to be most evocative were those he took from "unusual angles or from very close" (i.e. aerial photos), because they gave participants a view of their everyday landscape from a new perspective. Harper (2002) refers to these photos as "breaking the frame" (p. 20). I hoped that asking participants to take photographs of their everyday landscape, and then reflect on their significance, would give them a new or different perspective on normal routines and taken-for-granted knowledge of their social worlds.

Another rationale for the use of photo-elicitation in this study was to reduce power imbalances between myself and my participants, as well as enable the youth by engaging them in

a social practice with which they were familiar, taking pictures (Packard, 2008). For this reason, students were not coached on how to take their photographs, such as instruction on picture-taking strategies, in an effort to preserve whatever meaning the youth wished to convey through their photographs (Luttrell, 2010). The majority of my participants had access to smartphones and regularly used them to take photos. Digital photography was a tool, therefore, with which they already had some expertise. Participants only received basic instructions on how to take proper care of the camera, how to change the battery, remove the memory card, etc. The rationale for not giving more explicit guidance on how to take their photos was to avoid entering the role of 'teacher,' or instructing them on the 'right' way to take their photographs (Luttrell, 2010). Doing so would have re-introduced an unequal power dynamic into the researcher-participant relationship (Packard, 2008). Whereas other visual research methods, such as photovoice (Wang, 1999), may consider it necessary to teach participants how to use the camera, these methods have somewhat different goals, including influencing policymakers.

Another way in which photo-elicitation reduces the power differential between researcher and participants is by giving participants more control over the interview process. Clark-Ibáñez (2004) argues that elicitation interviews can reduce the awkwardness characteristic of traditional interviews because the photos themselves provide a focal point for the conversation, particularly when the interviewee has taken the photos, and therefore has expert knowledge of their content. I also gave participants the opportunity to remove any photos they had taken but did not want to make public to me. Rather than collect the cameras and develop the photographs as prints, I asked the students to bring their cameras to the third interview, and we viewed them together on a laptop computer. Developing prints of the photos would have added time and cost to the data collection. I provided students with a digital copy of their photos if they asked for one.

In addition to asking participants why they took certain photos, or what they showed, I also inquired into the process of taking the photos, and how the project compared with their everyday use of cameras. In a pilot study of this dissertation, in which disposable type cameras were used, a student commented that using this type of camera evoked memories of her childhood, because it was the only kind of camera her mother used. This student's comment points to the potential insights to be gained from a discussion not only of the photographic content, but the specific camera technology as well. Discussing how the participants use photography in their everyday life is also important in order to "explore whether the form the photographs take is influenced by other kinds of visual practice," such as maintaining family photo albums (Tinkler, 2008). Several students used their smartphones to store photos of family or friends. In some cases, students took photos of their phones in order to include people or places in their photos for the project, which they would otherwise be unable to access. In one case, it was evident that a student's photos were influenced by the kinds of photos he posted on his Instagram account. I also invited students to share about photographs they wished they had taken, which can be just as revealing (Hodgetts, Chamberlain & Radley, 2007). These conversations surfaced additional insights, such as places where participants were uncomfortable going because they felt unsafe. For instance, one participant included a picture taken from her computer of the library she goes to read, because she didn't feel safe walking there at night, which was the only free time she had to take her photos. In other cases, students were unable to take as many photos as they had wanted because of time constraints and their busy schedules. This led students to talk about the lack of free time they feel they have due to the demands of school, and different forms of paid and unpaid work.

Focus Group Meetings

Focus group meetings provided another context in which to consider the meaning of participants' photos. At the conclusion of the photo-elicitation interview students were asked to select approximately five photos that they wanted to share with a group of peers. In cases where a student took a very small number of photos, they were able to include them all in the focus group discussion. The composition of the focus groups was intentionally selected to create a space to explore salient identity topics, including the influence of religion, ethnicity and gender. The first focus group consisted of four girls, of different ethnic and religious backgrounds. Devising a group of all girls may have provided a comfortable space for the participants to discuss what role gender plays in their sense of belonging and civic identities. The second focus group consisted solely of male and female youth who identified as Muslim, from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. In this focus group, their experiences as Muslim youth figured prominently in the discussion.

One purpose of the focus groups was to create an opportunity for the participants to share their photographic work with an audience of their peers. Madriz (1998) contends that focus groups can take the form of collective testimony in which people of similar ethnic or socioeconomic backgrounds can experience self-validation. In her work, focus groups were a way for Latina women to "recover and use the knowledge acquired from women's subjective experiences of everyday life" (Madriz, 1998, p. 118). In my study, the focus groups provided a space for immigrant youth to have their everyday experiences of citizenship and belonging validated by listening to their peers voice their concerns. Another rationale for conducting focus groups with students was to attend to the multiple meanings generated by a photograph when viewed in different settings, such as the individual interview, versus the focus group (Clark-

Ibáñez, 2004; Schwartz, 1989). Luttrell (2010) orchestrated four separate audiencings of students' photographs: (1) a one-on-one interview with the researcher, (2) a peer-group session in which students shared five of their own photos, (3) videos of the youth explaining their photographs, (4) and a public exhibition of their photographs. Providing youth with a variety of audiences for their photos made it possible for me to attend to the ways in which context shaped how the youth spoke about the photos.

For example, one student's photograph of the outside of her mosque did not generate much discussion during the one-on-one interview, but sparked a lively debate in the focus group about the rights of Muslims to build mosques in America that look like those in their home countries. Comparing how the same photos were discussed in the individual and group setting was also necessary in order to understand how the photos might be used by participants to perform social identities (Rose, 2012). For example, youth might choose to photograph themselves reading a book, or completing homework, in order to represent themselves to me as taking advantage of educational opportunities, whereas in a focus group with peers, the same photo could be used to voice frustration about the lack of free time they have in America due to the demands of homework. Therefore, exploring how the same photograph can have multiple meanings depending on the context in which it is viewed or presented, yields additional insight into the relationships between social identity and belonging.

The focus group setting also provided an opportunity for the participants to comment on one another's photographs. In this respect, they functioned as an additional group photo-elicitation interview, in which peers' photos evoked new and different responses. Harper (2002) argues that photos can be used to bridge cultural boundaries between participants in the same research study, and as a means to compare how different people, depending on their social

location, can construct different meanings of shared spaces, such as school or a neighborhood. In this study, I compared how the youth perceived places that were part of a shared landscape, such as photos of school, a mosque, or a scene from the neighborhood around the school.

Participants' photographs

Apart from their use to elicit discussion in interviews and focus group meetings, the photos served as a final source of data for this study. In total I collected 280 photographs taken by the participants. Although I gave them all the same guideline to take about 20 photographs, the actual number of photos taken by each participant varied significantly, with the fewest being 5, and the most, 106.

Data Analysis

In this dissertation study data analysis was an ongoing and iterative process (Luttrell, 2009). As explained above, the interviews were semi-structured, and the exact set of questions I asked in each interview changed over time, the more I learned from my participants. Before conducting my second interview with each participant, I transcribed the first interview, and developed a set of questions that followed up on key themes that had been raised, or questions I wished I had asked. In cases where interviews were scheduled very close together and this was not possible, I made sure to listen to the audio-recording of the first interview. I also kept a researcher journal throughout data collection, in which I recorded key points of interest in my initial interviews, patterns across interviews with different participants, and difficulties I encountered with the research process. In addition, I periodically wrote researcher memos that summarized what I had learned so far, and connected the data back to my original research questions (Horvat, 2013). Writing researcher memos helped me to develop tacit theories about how transnationalism shapes immigrant civic belonging, which I then explored in subsequent

interviews. For example, in my first several interviews with youth from Senegal and Guinea, my participants all expressed the feeling that they had to challenge stereotypes of Africa held by their classmates, such as Africa being a country, rather than a continent, or an impoverished place. In subsequent interviews with other youth from Senegal, and Gambia, I asked questions to probe whether they also have had to confront such stereotypes. Including these additional questions in later interviews allowed me to make comparisons within the group.

After completing data collection, I used a constructed grounded theory approach to coding my data (Charmaz, 2014). I began by first analyzing word driven data from semi-structured and photo-elicitation interviews; I read through all interview transcripts and created open codes. I sought to develop codes that stayed close to the data, sometimes using participants' own words, otherwise referred to as *in vivo* codes. At this stage of coding I remained as open as possible to emergent themes in the data. Concurrent with coding, I wrote analytic memos. I took an analytic approach to writing memos, as advocated by Saldaña (2016): "analytic memo writing documents reflections on: your coding processes and code choices; how the process of inquiry is taking shape; and the emergent patterns, categories and subcategories, themes and concepts in your data – all possibly leading toward theory" (p. 44). Analytic memos became another source of data in the study and yielded additional codes that could then be used during a second cycle of focus coding. Through the analytic process of writing memos, open codes were refined and larger categories were identified. As grounded theorists argue (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2014), the process of collecting data, coding, and writing analytic memos is not linear, but instead occurs through a series of cycles that continue to drive the data analysis process.

In a second round of coding, I sought to create focus codes from my initial list of open codes (Saldaña, 2016). At this stage of coding I took note of any variations between and within

groups of students (i.e. Senegalese, Dominican), in order to trace possible links between their social identities, civic lives, and experiences of migration. In addition to making such comparisons I also felt it was important to value the individual stories and life histories of the participants. Luttrell (2010) discusses the benefits and drawbacks of a comparative approach with regards to her study of working class women: “the trade-off [is] that insofar as the women’s individuality (the personal context and emotional force of their stories) would be lost, building a theory about the links among school structure, culture and identity would be gained” (p. 265). My approach to coding attended to the complexities within each individual story, while still being able to draw comparisons between them. For instance, I read and coded all my interviews with each of the African youth first. At 5 out of 10 students, they constituted the largest group. While I did not complete a detailed case study on each participant, I created files for each participant that included all the data collected for that person. I hoped that this approach would allow me to attend to the individual stories participants had to tell, rather than simplifying their narratives in the interest of making simplistic comparisons later on. I then followed the same procedure with the Yemeni, Dominican and Bangladeshi students. While there are obvious limitations to drawing such comparisons in a study with so few participants, in my analysis I sought to identify the full range of immigrant youth experiences, and the host of factors that contribute to their varying senses of belonging.

Another important decision I confronted with respect to analyzing my data, was how to analyze students’ photographs. I did not begin analyzing the photos until after I had completed analysis of word-driven data. Whereas photo-elicitation has gained popularity as a research method in the social sciences (Rose, 2012), discussion in the literature about how to analyze photographs poses more questions than answers. Should photographs be analyzed solely

according to their content, or based on what students say about them during the elicitation interview? My approach was guided by how I planned to use the photos as data to answer my research questions. One purpose of the photos was to document material and social reality. For instance, in this study pictures of classrooms, parks, city streets, teachers, and friends, all reveal something about how the participants physically navigate their social and material reality, and contribute to our understanding of how they develop a sense of belonging, or social identities as immigrants, in particular places. Therefore, to a certain extent, photos were analyzed as “valuable as records of what was really there when the shutter snapped” (Rose, 2012, p. 299).

However, in addition to being used as evidence of the things or events that participants experienced in their world, another purpose of the photographs was to learn about the subjectivity of the people taking the photographs, who they are, and what matters to them” (Yates, 2010, p. 283). Yates (2010) refers to research studies in which the focus is on learning about the subjectivity of participants as “windows to identity” projects (p. 283). In order to learn about the civic identities of the participants in this study, attention was not only paid to what was depicted in the photos, but also why the youth chose to select particular content for their photo, and what the photos meant to them. Some researchers argue that photos have little meaning outside the context of the research project itself (Becker, 1995). The relationship between the researcher and participants also affects the meaning of the photos, and what participants have to say about them. Seen in this way, photos can also serve “as visual objects put to work to perform social identities and relations” (Rose, 2012, p. 313).

In consideration of these multiple meanings and purposes of the photos in this study, I first conducted a content analysis of the photos. Following Luttrell (2010), my “reason for doing [a] categorical content analysis...” was “less about establishing replicable or valid inferences,

and more about being systematic and transparent about one way of seeing/reading the photographs” (p. 229). Or, as Lutz and Collins (1993) argue, conducting a content analysis is necessary to avoid the danger of simply searching for photos that provide the evidence one is looking for in support of an argument. Analyzing the content of each photo also enabled a comparison between the internal and external narratives (Banks, 2001).

I gave each photo several codes, taking into consideration the multiple meanings contained in a photograph (see example of the coding scheme for photographs in Appendix A). For example, I devised codes to “reflect the status of the photographs in the interview: as inventories of material reality, as representations of social identity, and as objects whose meaning is negotiated in the context of the photo-elicitation interview” (Rose, 2012). I also drew from the coding schemes developed by other researchers. For example, Clark-Ibáñez (2007), who asked her youth participants to photograph things and places that were important to them, categorized the photos as “inventories, or events that are part of institutional paths (such as photos of schools), or as ‘intimate dimensions of the social’ (such as photos of family)” (p. 178, as cited in Rose, 2012, p. 314). Luttrell (2010) employed both inductive, and deductive codes; pictures were coded according to “setting (family, school, outside); people (female/male, children/adults); things (e.g. technological, toys, games); and genre (landscape, portrait)” (p. 229).

The final stage in my data analysis was to triangulate the different sources of data collected in the study, including both verbal and visual data. I compared what I had discovered through content analysis about what subjects appeared frequently or were missing in the photos, with what my participants said they had wished to photograph, but were unable. At this stage of data analysis, I also used concepts from my theoretical framework to create additional theoretical

codes that helped weave back together bits of fragmented visual and verbal data (Charmaz, 2014). To facilitate this process, I created visual displays of my data in order to analyze how my codes were related to one another and how civic belonging was developed by my participants (Maxwell, 2013) (see Appendix A).

I then compared how civic belonging as an emerging concept functioned differently across the contexts of school, neighborhood and home. At this time, I sorted my codes again into the categories of school, neighborhood and home. While some of the initial codes and conceptual categories appeared in all three contexts, how they functioned in each space differed. The creation of social trust, for example, was a recurring feature of civic belonging across the contexts, and yet, opportunities to develop trust were more available in school than in neighborhood communities. Moreover, in school students created more ‘bridging’ social trust by crossing linguistic and cultural barriers, whereas in the neighborhood they were prevented from doing so by a politics of belonging that denied them public recognition. This comparison across contexts also enabled me to see the intersections between the spaces of home, school and family. Participants sometimes referred to school as a ‘family.’ Relationships with parents and family were sometimes focused on working hard in the space of school. After comparing data across each of the three contexts I chose to report my findings in three separate findings chapters that follow. Chapter 4 focuses on how my participants create civic belonging in the public place of school, Chapter 5 considers the neighborhood context, and Chapter 6 focuses on the place of home. The separation of my findings into chapters on school, neighborhood and home does not merely reflect the fact that these are different locations, but rather serves to illustrate how social relationships leading to trust, recognition of identities, and belonging produced different senses of place in these spaces.

Trustworthiness

This dissertation study takes several different approaches to producing research findings that are trustworthy. The data in any qualitative research study is inevitably co-constructed by the researcher and his or her participants. The relationship between the youth participants and myself was affected by positionality as a White, male, monolingual researcher. One way I tried to address such issues of power in my study, and the effect this had on the data I collected, was by adopting a reflexive stance towards my research. For example, I attended to the ways in which my participants may have positioned themselves relative to me in the interview setting, and how they wished to represent themselves. Moreover, this research study sought to critically examine the labels “English Language Learners” or “im/immigrants,” and how these labels are used to highlight what students lack, rather than the assets they contribute to their civic learning (Luttrell, 2009). I gave attention to how students’ photographs could be interpreted as their attempt to “speak back to” these labels and discourses of immigration and citizenship.

Gathering data from several different sources, including individual interviews, photo-elicitation, and focus group interviews, enabled me to triangulate my findings (Cho & Trent, 2006). I also gained different insights from each source of data I collected, leading to more complex and nuanced explanations of how immigrant youth develop a sense of civic belonging. Furthermore, I was able to compare how the youth choose to represent themselves in an individual interview with me, an adult researcher, versus a focus group with their peers. As students shared their photos with one another in a focus group, they recognized similarities and differences between them, leading to new and different conversations about their civic experiences as immigrants. Moreover, their interpretations of photographs taken by their peers served as a kind of “member check” against my own analysis of the photographs.

As discussed earlier, the use of photo-elicitation as a research method is also meant to enable the youth participants, by giving them some control over the research agenda. I believe this led to more trustworthy findings (Thomas & O'Kane, 1998). Giving kids cameras was one way to minimize the distance between the researcher and the subjects. As students discussed their photographs with me, they were positioned as the expert on their own worlds. Finally, conducting three interviews that took place over a period of time, as well as conducting a focus group, added a longitudinal aspect to the study. Having multiple opportunities to meet and interview each of my participants gave me the opportunity to not only build rapport with them, but also to compare how they discussed their sense of civic belonging in the interviews and focus groups over time, and across different data points.

Researcher Positionality

My positionality as a European-American, White, male, monolingual English speaker affected this dissertation study in a number of ways. On several occasions throughout the research process, I was asked by colleagues, family, and interested observers why I wished to study the experiences of immigrant youth, whose backgrounds, at least on the surface, had little in common with my own. Admittedly, this question caught me off-guard. However, it also forced me to consider how my own subjectivity, unconsciously or not, was present in my research (Peshkin, 1998). As Peshkin (1998) advises, I reflected on my feelings during different stages in the research process – “warm and cool spots, the emergence of positive or negative feelings,” and/or avoidance of certain experiences – in order to be more aware of my subjectivity (p. 18).

One subjectivity I believe impacted my research was my Irish-American identity. Although I have to go back at least three generations to trace any claim to Irish ancestry, it is a part of my own sense of belonging nonetheless. Engaging in this research has made me more

aware of how actions I have taken in my own life, whether a solo trip to Ireland after college, or going to hear traditional Irish music seisiúns in New York City, could be interpreted as attempts to maintain my transnational ties to Ireland (Levitt, 2007). My subjectivity was also influenced by the fact that my step-father is a second-generation Chinese immigrant, and my sisters were adopted from South Korea. Being raised in a multicultural family I believe has made me more curious about and sensitive to the maintenance of cultural identities and how it feels not to fit in to certain places.

These subjectivities were sometimes aroused when my participants spoke about their maintenance of cultural ties to their home countries as a form of resistance against assimilation. I may have been more attuned to (and interested in) my participants' representation of their home cultures than their choice to adopt American popular culture. Through reflecting on my own subjectivity, I became more cognizant that my participants' identities were multifaceted, and being an "immigrant" was not (always) the most salient aspect. When Kadija shared with me her love of dystopian novels from the *Divergent* (2011) series, for example, at first I dismissed this as unrelated to the research project. Later, however, I saw how she related the themes of identity and authenticity in the novel to her own desire for public recognition in the space of school. I became more open to what my participants wanted to tell me, versus the story I expected to hear.

Moreover, the stories they told me were influenced by my positionality in the research. This became abruptly clear to me during a focus group in which students disagreed about whether the 'American dream' was achievable for everyone. At one point during the discussion Assiatou turned to me and asked, "Mister, do you think America is a land of opportunity?" It was not often that my participants took on the role of interviewing me. I chose to answer Assiatou's question openly by saying that I didn't believe there was equality of opportunity in America.

Afterwards Assiatou then shared her opinion that America is a land of opportunity “for mostly white people, but for immigrant people it’s not a land of opportunity.” In this moment, I became aware of how my positionality as an “American” and “white” may have affected what my participants chose to tell me. It is possible that there were additional instances when my participants were unsure whether or not to share their criticisms of America due to their perceptions of me.

At times, I believe my racial identity as white may have contributed to an unease on the part of my participants to speak openly about their experiences of racism, or how they talked with me about race. When discussing places where he felt comfortable, Yasser, a student from Yemen, said he preferred downtown because people “like Mr. Doyle (a white, European-American male teacher) and you, these kinds of people live there.” According to Yasser downtown was closer to the “real” America that people in Yemen imagine it to be. He contrasted people downtown with African Americans in Harlem, where his family owned a grocery store. He described the people in Harlem as “fake” and talked about negative encounters he had with black customers who stole candy from the grocery, or who he thought were “unprofessional.” He blamed African Americans for their low social status in American society, and African American parents for failing to instill in their children a disciplined work ethic. These conversations made me uncomfortable, and I wasn’t sure whether to confront him about these racist characterizations. Regardless, I think my positionality as a white male affected what he told me, and what I consequently learned about how Yasser was making sense of where he felt he belonged in the U.S. racial hierarchy, and how he could “make it” in America.

My relationship with International Academy for the year prior to conducting the study was as a field supervisor for pre-service social studies teachers. In this role, I conducted many

observations of classrooms and entered the field with considerable knowledge of the school's approach to educating late-arrival immigrant youth. This allowed me to establish greater rapport with my participants, as I could refer to common instructional practices like an insider. At the same time, due to conducting my research at the school, the youth may have considered me like a teacher, and viewed their participation in the study like a school assignment. For instance, when sharing their photographs with me during the PEI, participants sometimes sought confirmation that their photos were "good," or apologized for not taking more.

My position as a mono-lingual English speaker had an obvious impact on the research as well, since none of the interviews were conducted in my participants' home languages. Although all of my participants could speak English, I was unable to collect as much data from some who were less fluent and seemed more reticent as a result. I could sometimes sense participants' fatigue at speaking in English over the course of a 45-minute interview, and in those instances, I felt it necessary to shorten some interview sessions. In order to minimize power imbalances between myself and the participants due to language, photo-elicitation was also selected in order to provide them with another means to communicate. In some instances, the photos served as a common reference point during the interview, and another medium of communication beyond just words (Clark-Ibáñez, 2004).

Ethical considerations

In addition to meeting institutional requirements for research with human subjects, my study, which involved doing research with youth using photography, raised additional ethical concerns that needed to be addressed (Valentine, 1999; Rose, 2013). While the usual considerations relating to obtaining informed consent and ensuring the confidentiality of the participants applied, additional concerns arose that are specific to the use of visual research

methods. One such consideration was whether and how to obtain the consent of people who appeared in the photographs. In my study, I required that participants receive verbal permission from anyone they wished to photograph, and/or who would be recognizable in the photo. This guideline applied not only to photographs taken in private spaces, such as the homes of participants, but public spaces as well, even if this was not legally necessary. However, I chose not to require the youth photographers to obtain written consent from anyone in the photo, as I felt this would have been so onerous that it would have excluded them from taking certain kinds of photographs. Limiting the participants to taking only certain types of photos would have undermined the collaborative nature of the research project.

Another ethical consideration that needed to be addressed was ownership of the photographs, and how they would be shared (Rose, 2012). The photographs in this study were not to be shown to anyone outside of the interviews and focus groups without explicit permission from the person who took the photograph. As explained above, each participant was given the option of removing any photograph they did not want to share with their peers during the focus group sessions. In the future, if either myself or any of the youth participants wished to display the photograph publicly, such as in a published piece of writing, or at a conference, specific permission would be requested from the photographer and any people who are in the photograph. Due to the collaborative nature of doing a photo-elicitation study with young people, it is also possible that the ethical demands of the research will need to be negotiated over time. In this way, the consent process is best viewed as ongoing, rather than as a one-time event (Rose, 2012).

Finally, I worked to achieve some level of reciprocity between myself and my participants. Participating in the study required a significant time commitment, and I wanted to think of ways the project might benefit them. This occurred in a number of ways. When I noticed

that many of the students talked about parks as places of significance for them, and also being places they had little access to outside their immediate neighborhood, I arranged a day trip for to Central Park for the students at Community High School. Two students asked if they could invite friends from outside the project to come along, and all but one student was able to come on the trip. Several students dressed up for the occasion. They enjoyed walking around the park, using their smartphones to take group selfies to document the experience. After a pizza lunch, we went on a tour of the Columbia University campus, as one student had asked me to arrange a visit. Afterwards several students remarked about how they had not visited a college campus before that day. At the conclusion of the project, to provide closure for the students, we celebrated with another pizza lunch at their school. Several of the participants expressed interest in knowing the results of the study, and I offered to share these with them.

Limitations

As is the case with all qualitative research, and with a sample size of just 10 participants, this dissertation study does not have a goal of producing findings that can be generalized to a specific population of immigrant youth. Rather, the aim of this study has been to gather contextualized data in order to reveal the complexity of immigrant youth experiences and meaning-making. Nonetheless, some might regard the lack of generalizability as one limitation of the study. Another limitation of this study is the fact the fact that I, the researcher, am not fluent in the native languages of my participants. While no set of qualitative research methods is capable of capturing every aspect of social reality, the fact that my participants had to express their experiences of belonging in English, which was not their first language, meant that some of my participants' meaning may have gotten lost in translation. I attempted to address this limitation in the study by including the use of focus group meetings with native language peers,

so they could have the chance to speak with a peer in their native language as a means of formulating their ideas and opinions in English. A final limitation of the study is the absence of a public exhibition of participants' photographs, which would have provided yet another opportunity to assess the potential audiences for the youths' self-representations (Luttrell, 2010).

Chapter 4 – Developing a Sense of Civic Belonging in School

We let society define us too much. And I don't know who society is. Because we separate ourselves, we humans, starting with the countries, then with the color, then after that it's who you are, and the person you be... Because if there were not these boundaries..., you can see two countries that is so close, it's just a line that separate them, like why is that there? If it was not there then it would be like less conflict because if someone step out of that space, then you wouldn't be like... this is mine. (Kadija, November 2, 2015)

The participants in this study challenged the boundaries of belonging in a variety of ways. For example, Kadija asks why there is a line separating different countries, and argues that these boundaries lead to greater conflict by including some and excluding others. Her query applies to what it means to belong at several different levels, including the moral claims people have to particular spaces, that entitle them to say “this is mine.” Kadija’s question also points to the role boundaries play in determining who gets to belong to a particular space, nation-state, or geographic territory. How boundaries get drawn, who decides where the boundaries lie, and what purposes they serve all involve the rights of particular persons to belong in those spaces. The variety of political projects through which boundaries are maintained make up a politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Public schools play a formative role in the political socialization of youth. In this chapter I explore how my participants established a sense of civic belonging in relation to different kinds of boundaries. Flanagan (2013) refers to schools as “mini-polities” because they provide youth with proximate “experiences of membership, of exercising prerogatives, and of assuming obligations (Flanagan, 2013, p. 2). Thinking of schools as mini-polities attends to the role of

social relations in building trust and civic belonging in school spaces. However, in fulfilling their civic mission, schools inevitably maintain and regulate certain boundaries to define who belongs to the mini-polity, such as in the ways they treat students' native languages or home cultures. Young people also exert agency to create civic belonging in the face of boundaries. They may do so by separating themselves according to the countries they migrated from, the color of their skin, or their religious faiths. They simultaneously resist such categorizations, as Kadija exhorted, by not letting society define them too much.

Participants developed a sense of civic belonging in school by adopting flexible forms of attachment, which included forming social ties with peers and teachers who were both like them and different in significant ways. For instance, the youth from Senegal, the Gambia, and Guinea sometimes referred to themselves as "African" in order to form a shared identity in school. In choosing to identify as "African," they necessarily widened the boundaries of belonging to include all students from African countries in order emphasize what they held in common. Through this process, they reinforced certain boundaries and resisted others. As an example, they bridged linguistic differences by speaking in English as a means to belong. The youths from Bangladesh, Senegal, and Yemen also redrew certain boundaries by forming a common identity as Muslim on the basis of their shared religious beliefs.

The sense of belonging the youths felt in school was facilitated by the emotional connections they made to teachers and peers. A sense of belonging includes having an emotional attachment to a place, including to the people in that space. My participants actively sought out social relationships with peers and teachers that facilitated the creation of social trust. In his analysis of social capital across American cities, Putnam (2007) finds that the more diverse a setting, the more difficult it may be to generate social capital. An explanation Putnam offers for

this finding is that the more people are brought into contact with others that are of a different race, religion, or ethnicity, the more likely they are to stick with people who are like them, rather than extend a helping hand others. However, Putnam challenges the assumption that our desire to protect and serve the interests of those we care about intimately, and those we consider strangers, are inversely correlated. Putnam argues that ‘bonding’ social capital and ‘bridging’ social capital may in fact be reinforcing; having many friends who are like me may also predispose me to having friends who are not like me. My participants came to belong by negotiating boundaries in order to create both bonding and bridging social capital. First, they built social trust with people who they knew personally or with whom they shared a common identity. They were then able to more easily cross boundaries or extend them to create social trust with people who were different, including adults. Through this process, the youth were able to experience the school as a mini-polity in which they could work towards developing generalized trust that is necessary for citizens in a democracy to overcome self-interest. The sense of place the youths in this study had of school, was as a caring, empathetic, and close-knit community. This highlights an important emotional aspect of civic belonging and citizenship preparation.

Their emotional connections to people and their sense of place at school affected how they negotiated boundaries and developed social trust. In this chapter I discuss three ways my participants created civic belonging in school. I begin by explaining how they form social capital with peers with whom they share an identity, then how they develop caring relationships with teachers, and finally, how they bridge differences to create civic belonging.

Peer relationships and the creation of bonding social capital

School was a place where relationships between peers fostered social trust, leading to a greater sense of belonging. By making friends young people learn how to trust others and to

become trustworthy people. In friendships, we allow ourselves to become vulnerable to others, which requires a certain level of trust. Friendship also includes the willingness to make sacrifices for others, such as our time, or risking social disapproval (Flanagan, 2013). Even if it's not in our self-interest to help a friend, we do it because being a good friend means "being there" for that person. Moreover, we know that there may come a time when we need help from a friend, and we expect him or her to reciprocate. This is what binds friends together, and through this experience, youth learn the meaning of working with others in a democratic society. This act of working with others towards a common goal is what creates a sense of civic belonging.

Nicole discussed the characteristics she looks for in a friend while offering her advice to other immigrants hoping to make friends in New York:

I really look for honesty, and respect and trust. Because if I can't trust a person, this is going to be, you know bad things... and if there's not respect also, there will not be a good friendship. If there's not those three things in a friendship then it's nothing. Just like you know being with a stranger, there's nothing there (interview, November 8, 2015).

The distinction Nicole makes between a friend and a stranger, reveals what she considered to be an essential component of friendship. Friends are honest with each other, and tell each other the truth; this includes being true to your word and not changing who you are. Nicole also emphasized respect; through our friendships we both give and earn the respect of others. As Nicole explains, if we're not able to depend on our friends, "there's nothing there," and we might as well be strangers to one another. Through the everyday honoring of promises, these youths developed social trust and learned the critical civic virtue of being trustworthy (Lummis, 1996).

While explaining why she doesn't have a large number of friends, Kadija spoke about the true test of friendship being whether a friend sticks by you when times are difficult:

Um, I don't really have many because I don't like fake people... Yeah because some people will be your friend and everything but then when you're in tough moment that's when you kind of see your true friends... The one who always fighting with you, and telling you not to do this, not to do that, I feel like her, really deep down, she's the one who really love you because she just want you to do good stuff (interview, November 2, 2015).

Kadija's reference to "fake people" shows the value she places on being authentic. Loving friends hold each other accountable to being their authentic selves, not just telling them what they want to hear. Friendships like the ones Kadija and Nicole describe, played an important role in how they developed a sense of belonging in school. They were able to belong in school because they had friends who were honest with them and respected them for who they were, even in difficult times.

On her relational map, Sophia wrote the name of a friend who played this role by encouraging her to stay true to her beliefs, in particular her choice to wear the hijab. As a Muslim female, Sophia was sometimes teased for wearing the hijab. Her friend told her, "you don't have to listen to them, it's your religion, you don't have to change it to what the other people say is good... you are Sofia, Sofia should never change." According to Sofia, "I love her because she [is] like a big sister" (interview, November 2, 2015). In referring to her friend "like a big sister," Sophia elevates the friendship to a family-like connection. She is able to count on this friend like she could count on a big sister to stand up for her. As an older student, this friend also acted as a knowledgeable guide for Sophia when she was still new to the school. As Sophia explained, "When I come to school in 9th grade, she was here and she speak English. She teach me how to write, how to read, how I can speak with the other people, who's good, who's bad" (interview,

November 2, 2015). Feeling like she had a loyal friend looking out for her in this way, dispensing advice, and acting as a moral guide, contributed to Sophia's sense of belonging because she felt less pressure to change who she was in order to be accepted. Sophia illustrates how bonding social capital leads to a sense of civic belonging. Sophia was able to form a social connection with someone who shared and understood her religious practice, which served to reaffirm and support her right to exist in the space of school without compromising on her core beliefs. Sophia and her friend were also both from Yemen, another point of connection.

The creation of bonding social capital through learning to trust people who are like us, as Sophia did, can become a bridge towards building more generalized trust with people who are not like us. As Flanagan (2013) states, if the democratic virtues of being trustworthy and trusting others "become integral to one's identity" youth who have had close friendships with ethnic or religious peers "should be better prepared to extend the boundaries of those they trust to a larger segment of their community" (p. 169). This phenomenon occurred among the youth from Senegal, Guinea and the Gambia, in the ways they re-drew the boundaries of belonging to encircle other students at their school from African countries. In interviews, the students from Guinea, Senegal and the Gambia often referred to themselves as "African" rather than choosing a national affiliation (i.e. Senegalese, Gambian, etc.). Moreover, rather than only building trust with friends from Senegal, Kadija and Sembene extended the boundaries of belonging to include additional friends from Guinea. Taking this step to create a sense of belonging may have been in response to the fact that there were relatively few students from African countries at the school. By re-drawing the boundaries of belonging and identifying themselves as "African," they had access to a larger social network of peers at school.

By referring to themselves as African, the youth challenged the notion of static or predetermined scales of belonging. For students like Kadija, extending the boundaries of belonging was a means of making the place of school more familiar. Kadija included the word “Africa” on her map of significant places. When I asked her if she meant all of Africa, or just Senegal, her home country, she said,

I mean all of it... whenever you say Africa it's me, because it's part of me... because whenever someone is talking, when they say African I feel included because it's my root. And if they Senegal I'm also included because that's where I come from **but we're all Africa**” (interview, November).

Rooting herself in the African continent is how Kadija was able to create a sense of commonality with other peers in her school. Although she comes from Senegal, Kadija considers Africa a part of her, which functioned as a source of stability amidst other changes. Just the mention of the word “Africa” made her feel a part of that group of people. Identifying as African also contributed to her sense of belonging by allowing her to maintain her authenticity in the space of school. Finding people with whom she could connect on this basis also enabled her to build social trust with others. Putting one's trust in people requires a leap of faith that they can be relied upon. Kadija was able to form a social connection to peers in school she could trust more easily because of their shared connection to Africa.

Assiatou took a photograph of a pendant she wears in the shape of the African continent to display her ancestry. The pendant is etched with the Nile River, and the names of several West African cities, including “Brazzaville,” “Lagos,” and “Dakar” (Figure 1). When she first arrived in New York, she noticed other people wearing a similar necklace and asked her mother to buy her one. According to Assiatou, people wear it to signal to others that they are from Africa. She



Figure 2: Photo of dancers

Assiatou discussed her involvement with the group during the photo-elicitation interview, when she showed me a picture she had taken of several dancers practicing (Figure 2). In the photo four or five girls are shown, with one girl appearing to lead the others in a dance. Chairs and tables have been pushed to the side to make room. Assiatou explained the impetus behind the group:

When I came here [to WCHS] I saw like all the culture have... like Spanish have their own bachata dance, and then they got hip-hop, they got capoeira, taekwondo, and all that kind of stuff and then I realized that there's no African dance. **We need to come together** because **we are more than 10 people in this school**, like African people. So, we were trying to decide that **we need to show the people how African people be dancing** and all that. That's why I take this picture, because we be practicing every lunch. And we don't got a teacher, we be teaching ourselves (photo elicitation, November 19, 2015).

The creation of an African dance group exemplifies how the youths' sense of civic belonging depended on gaining public recognition for Africa. Assiatou saw a need for African students to "come together" and "show the people how African people be dancing" in order to have a more visible presence in the school community. Since "the Spanish have their own bachata dance," it

was important to Assiatou that the “African” students also have their culture recognized formally at the multicultural celebration later that month.

The creation of the dance group was also a means to extend the boundaries of trust to include a larger segment of the school community. All members of the dance group shared responsibility for contributing songs and original ideas for choreography. Assiatou explained their creative process this way:

So, we all be bringing songs and... if you bring a song you need to show the step too.

You need to bring your own step... Even if you don't know the step you can bring some movement you think you can add to it, and everybody will bring some, have some information so we can add more to the song (photo elicitation, November 19, 2015).

As Assiatou explains, the group members depended on each other to bring songs and collaborate on the movements and steps. Therefore, the experience provided a space in which to establish relations of trust and reciprocity. Belonging to the group meant trusting others to share one’s ideas and being trustworthy. Moreover, Assiatou emphasized that the group did not have a teacher to teach them. Through their own initiative, the students met during lunch and taught themselves. Assiatou took civic action by working with others towards a common goal of creating an original dance performance which would make African students more visible. The obvious pride with which Assiatou talked about the dance group serves as evidence that being trustworthy and trusting others was becoming integral to her own civic identity. Finally, the formation of the African dance group illustrates how the school could function as a transcultural space in which the youth exerted agency to create original cultural forms shaped by migration (Malsbary, 2016). Transcultural spaces are those where “forms fluidly change and are reused to fashion hybrid identities in diverse contexts, absorbing the ‘effects of many encounters and

hybrid co-productions of languages and cultures” (Pennycook, cited in Malsbary, 2016). By exercising their creativity in these ways, the participants in this study not only author unique cultural forms, but also gain cultural recognition in the public space of school.

Assuming a regional African identity was also a means for Sembene to belong. Sembene provides a case of circular migration. He was born in the United States, but from the age of eight until he was fifteen, his parents sent him to Senegal to live with his grandmother. Sembene explained why he chooses to refer to himself as African at school:

In school, I take myself as African because it’s an international school so, okay if I was an American and I speak English well, would I be here? I would be in another school. So, in school, I mean people know that I was born here [in the U.S.], but I just like to be humble with it, I mean I’m African, that’s what I just say to people in school (interview, October 15, 2015).

Considering himself African in the space of school was a means by which he could expand his boundaries of who he trusted to include his peers from African countries in school. Although he was born in America and was a U.S. citizen, he chose “to be humble with it.” Sembene was therefore aware of his elevated citizenship status, which entitled him to certain political rights and privileges in America that many of his school peers lacked. Referring to himself as American at school would create a wedge between himself and his friends who could not claim American citizenship, thereby excluding them from the boundaries of civic belonging. Instead, he created a social connection to his peers born in Senegal and Guinea by highlighting an aspect of his identity that they shared in the space of school.

Moreover, Sembene’s sense of belonging in school was tied to the fact that it was an “international” school for students like himself who were still learning English. Moreover,

despite having U.S. citizenship, he was aware that other people did not accept him as fully American outside of the space of school because his English wasn't perfect. Sembene explained the reaction he sometimes got from people when he referred to himself as American:

Sometimes, I just pop out I'm American... But sometimes also when I say I'm American people take it as a joke because my English is not so perfect, because I'm still developing it, like how it was before I went to Africa (interview, October 15, 2015).

Hence, in the space of school, identifying as African and as emergent bilingual is how Sembene was able to create civic belonging. As he points out, in order to belong in "another school" he would have to be "American and speak English well." At WCHS he is able to develop social trust and bond with his peers who, like him, are excluded from civic belonging outside of school for being emergent bilingual.

Forming social trust and bonding social capital with peers who were like themselves in a meaningful way contributed to their civic belonging in school. By forging caring relationships with teachers, my participants learned to take greater risks with their trust by building bridges between youth and adults in school.

Relationships with teachers to build social trust

In his analytic framework of social capital and institutional support, Stanton-Salazar (1997) defines "institutional agents" as "those individuals who have the capacity and commitment to transmit directly, or negotiate the transmission of institutional resources and opportunities" (p. 6). Examples of institutional agents in schools include teachers, school counselors, and peers. In the literature, the concept of institutional agents has been primarily used to explain how racial minority children convert social capital into academic success. However, adults in school also contributed to the creation of social trust, and helped the youths

acquire the civic disposition of being trustworthy and capable of trusting others. My participants actively sought out social relationships with their teachers, which they highlighted as significant to their sense of belonging. Forming social ties with teachers was a means for the youth to build social trust that crossed the social hierarchy that characterizes the traditional student-teacher relationship. Relationships with teachers were a means for students span the boundaries that separate people, in this case the separation between the worlds of young people and adults.



Figure 3: Photo of teacher



Figure 4: Photo of teacher and student



Figure 5: Photo of teacher and two students

Six out of ten of participants wrote “teacher,” “counselor” or the name of a specific teacher/adult from school on their relational maps. Kadija took three photographs of teachers; her social studies teacher (Figure 3), her friend and her English teacher (Figure 4), and her friend, her science teacher, and herself (Figure 5). Participants described their teachers to be caring people who not only taught them academic content, but also provided crucial emotional support. The photo of Kadija’s science teacher captures the closeness of their relationship. Among the three photos Kadija took of teachers, this is the only one in which she is in the picture. Her science teacher is centered in the photo, with Kadija and her friend positioned on either side. They are standing beside each other, close enough that their bodies are touching, with arms outstretched behind them. Kadija had this to say about the photo:

This is like our team, Ms. Smith and Heather. She is not like our teacher, she’s our friend, she’s super cool. Like when we don’t feel good, she doesn’t feel good either. And she’s just always, what happened, and she cares and she make us know that she cares and that means a lot to us (interview, November 2, 2015).

Kadija’s reference to herself, Heather and Ms. Smith as a “team” shows how being able to depend on each other was an important element of the social trust they developed. Members of a team create social trust and belonging by working together to reach a common goal, which in the context of her science classroom included academic learning. However, Kadija’s characterization of Ms. Smith as not only a teacher, but rather a friend, suggests that their relationship contributed to more than better grades. The social connection was so intimate that, according to Kadija she and her science teacher’s emotional states were interwoven, such that one person could not “feel good” without the other. This empathetic relationship between Kadija and her science teacher is emblematic of the emotional connection between students and some teachers, which was an



Figure 6: Exterior of school building

important aspect of their sense of belonging in school. Developing this level of intimacy and empathy with her science teacher was a way she overcame the social divisions that typically separate children and teachers, or diminish youth concerns as less important than adult concerns.

Although Nicole did not photograph any of her teachers, she used a photo of the exterior of her school building to discuss the significance of her relationships with teachers to her sense of belonging as a young immigrant (Figure 6). As Nicole explained,

It was hard to be an immigrant here in a school in a new place. But I really like school because there I can learn. I can learn new things in many ways, like about life, classes, everything. So, this school is really important for me because when I was in Middle School I didn't really like the school. I was not comfortable. There were people that were really mean, the teachers, like they didn't care about anything. But here I love most of my teachers, and when you like a teacher, you can learn better. Because you get interested in everything. And when you know that people care, that also helps you to become better in (photo-elicitation, January 7, 2016).

The comparison Nicole makes between her middle school, where she didn't feel comfortable because teachers didn't care about students, and WCHS where she loved most of her teachers,

exemplifies how emotional ties contributed to a sense of belonging. According to Nicole, at her middle school teachers helped students because it was a job for which they got paid, not because they genuinely cared about students. However, at WCHS, teachers “look for a million ways for you to become better” (interview, November 13, 2015). Teachers show they care by being available outside of class to help students. As Nicole explained, “they stay after school. If you cannot do after school then let's do it at lunch. If you don't understand it this way let's put it another way. And they like give you many ways to do things” (interview, November 13, 2015). The feeling that teachers would be there for students outside of class no matter what, and were flexible in their teaching to explain material in different ways until students got it, allowed the students to trust their teachers. This form of teacher caring included respect for students as authentic individuals and is an important element of the trust students developed in school. The ability to be their authentic selves in school not only created trust, but also a sense of civic belonging based on working alongside teachers to reach the goal of not only succeeding academically, but also learning about “life” and becoming a “better” person.

My participants’ depictions of their relationships with teachers reflects notions of caring advocated by Noddings (1992), who argues that teachers must attend to the whole child, by considering the emotional and psychological needs of their students. Building upon Noddings, Valenzuela (1999) advocates for what she calls “authentic caring” in her work with Latino/a immigrant youth. A key feature of authentic caring is that it “emphasizes relations of reciprocity between teachers and students” (p. 61). If we expect students to care about school, then they must know that teachers care about them. Relations of reciprocity are also necessary for the creation of social trust. Being able to rely on friends is necessary for the development of interpersonal trust. Nicole and Kadija feel that they can rely on their teachers to stand beside

them in ways that extended beyond typical student-teacher relations. Students built upon the social trust they developed with teachers to establish a secure sense of belonging in school, enabling them to take greater risk of trusting peers who were different from themselves in some significant way by crossing linguistic and ethnic boundaries.

This form of authentic caring, based on teachers standing with students, was evident in Assiatou's relationship with Mr. Stephen, leading to Assiatou's direct civic involvement to benefit her school. Mr. Stephen was the former dean and soccer coach at WCHS. Assiatou discussed her relationship with Mr. Stephen in the context of a photo she took of a televised



Figure 7: Photo of soccer match

soccer match in her home (Figure 7). She took the photo “to represent Africa. Because mostly all African people know how to play soccer” (photo-elicitation, November 19, 2015). Assiatou used to play on her school's soccer team, until all sports programs at her school were eliminated by the New York City Department of Education (DOE). She and about fifty of her peers attended a school board meeting to protest the decision. Assiatou's involvement in the protest was influenced by her relationship with Mr. Stephen, who shared his views with students about the unfairness of the DOE decision and helped to mobilize students. The stated reason for the

elimination of the sports program was that WCHS was too small to meet eligibility requirements established by the Public School Athletic League, which funds sports programs at DOE schools.

According to Assiatou, this policy discriminated against students of color, and immigrants like herself, who are more likely to attend small schools with no sports programs being offered. Assiatou considered Mr. Stephen to be an important advocate for the rights of immigrant youth to play sports at WCHS. Following the protest Mr. Stephen and several other teachers who were present were reassigned to a different school. Assiatou provided the following explanation:

Mr. Stephen is the one that helped us get sports but they fired him because he was helping Black and Latino students. Because it wasn't fair, only West Community High School doesn't have sports...because we are all kind of immigrants, and we all kind of black, so that's why we didn't have sports (photo-elicitation, November 19, 2015).

Assiatou's interpretation of the incident show how Mr. Stephen's advocacy for fair and equal access to extracurricular activities led to her feeling cared for at school. She expressed a combination of appreciation and concern for Mr. Stephen, who she believed had been "fired" for helping Black and Latino students. Her belief that Mr. Stephen had her back, even if meant losing his job, allowed for the creation of social trust with a teacher who authentically cared. Assiatou also cared for Mr. Stephen, who she feared might be fired from his new school if he continued advocating for students' rights: "I tell him be careful because I don't want you to get fired there and I don't know what kind of job you're going to get" (photo-elicitation, November 19, 2015). Her genuine concern for Mr. Stephen shows the reciprocity in their relationship that is necessary for social trust to develop. Although Assiatou and her peers were unsuccessful in getting the soccer team re-instated, through the caring relationship they developed with Mr.

Stephen they learned a valuable civics lesson by tapping into social networks at their school and working with others to bring benefits to the entire school community.

Crossing boundaries separating adults and children contributed to youths' sense of civic belonging, which led to the formation caring relationships between teachers and students. The final example of civic belonging youth constructed in school was with peers by bridging linguistic and cultural differences.

Creating bridging social capital with peers

In addition to building trusting relationships with co-ethnic peers and with teachers, my participants also bridged cultural difference as a means to developing a sense of civic belonging in school. One of the ways they did this was by constructing a sense of place of school as “international,” where there was no single “cultural mainstream” into which they had to either assimilate or be excluded from. Researchers have begun to characterize spaces like WCHS that have “bilingual populations, students with multiple racial affiliations, U.S.-born and immigrant/transnational students, and students with varying economic class backgrounds” as “hyper-diverse” (Malsbary, 2016) and “super-diverse” (Vertovec, 2007). Such settings challenge researchers to attend more carefully to the influence of social context on the ways in which students become socialized as citizens, including “differential immigration statuses and their concomitant entitlements and restrictions of rights, divergent labor market experiences, discrete gender and age profiles, [and] patterns of spatial distribution” (Vertovec, 2007, p. 1025). This convergence of factors mutually condition one another to create a complex social environment in



Figure 8: Photo of three students



Figure 9: Photo of four students

which this study's participants develop a sense of belonging and civic identities. While the students did not deny the existence of various boundaries, they could establish civic belonging at different scales to emphasize both the similarities and differences between them.

Students represented the diversity of their school by taking photos of groups of classmates to represent the variety of nationalities represented at school. A picture by Sembene shows three students sitting together at a table in their classroom (Figure 8). The students appear to be brought together for the purpose of being photographed. They are not engaged in school work, and their posture is relaxed. Sembene explained how and why he assembled this group of students in the photograph: “So she's Honduran, and he's Mexican, and [he's] Puerto Rican. I just mixed all of them together and take one picture to show that it's not just Africans, or Dominicans, it's many people together, many cultures together” (photo-elicitation, December 8, 2015). The continued significance of national boundaries is apparent in the fact that Sembene knows and refers specifically to the home countries of each of the students in the photo. However, the photograph is meant to show that students from these different countries come together in the space of school.

Assiatou choreographed a similar photograph of four of her classmates to show “it's not everybody discriminating people the way you are... We all from different countries but we kind of family. We're always together” (photo-elicitation, November 19, 2015). The physical closeness of the students is noteworthy in Assiatou’s photograph, which resembles a family portrait (Figure 9). The single male in the photograph stands in the back, seeming to occupy the position of “father,” and is flanked by three other female students who are sitting beside him. In these aspects, the photograph reproduces an idyllic, gendered image of the nuclear family (Rose, 2010). In considering the influence of other kinds of visual practice (Rose, 2012) the composition of her photograph suggests that Assiatou may have drawn upon the genre of family photography to portray the familial relationships at her school. While still referencing the existence of certain boundaries (i.e. “we all from different countries”), Assiatou uses her photograph to demonstrate that students, like a family, “don’t discriminate.”

Bakary also chose to highlight the ways in which students of different cultural backgrounds interacted during his advisory class (Figure 10). On the left-hand side of the photograph a group of students looks engaged in conversation. On the right-hand side a pair of students is looking at something just outside the frame. In his photo-elicitation interview Bakary



Figure 10: Photo of classroom

described how he stood on a chair in the corner of the room in the hopes of including everyone in the photograph. When I asked him why this was important he said, “To show everyone, to see how do people mix, to see people different, differences” (photo-elicitation, April 6, 2016).

Therefore, it was important to Bakary to take a photograph that would capture the ways in which different students “mixed.” The ability to interact with people of different cultures and native languages is what allowed him to develop trust and feel a sense of civic belonging in school. Both being inclusive by trying not to leave anyone out of the photographic frame, and representing his school as an inclusive space, was a way to assert his own right to belong.

However, the content of their photos only tells part of the story about how my participants established civic belonging in school. Analyzing how they engaged with the photographic task as a social practice provides additional evidence of how they crossed boundaries to construct civic belonging. According to Tinkler (2008), young people’s “photographic practices are used to represent, establish and maintain relationships between people... Photographic images are a means of representing connections, establishing visually who is a member of a particular community” (p. 262). By asking their classmates to pose for their photographs, Sembene and Assiatou used the camera to produce and articulate their belonging, thereby reinforcing peer relationships and building social trust. Likewise, taking photos of her teachers may have been a way for Kadija to demonstrate her emotional connection to them visually, and to establish her sense of belonging in and through their relationship.

Another means by which my participants bridged cultural and linguistic differences was by collaborating to complete academic assignments. A core principal of both schools is “heterogeneity and collaboration” (<http://internationalsnps.org/about-us/internationals-approach/>). An example of how this principle was put into practice is students were grouped

heterogeneously according to proficiency in English, native language, and academic background. In addition, most instruction was student-centered and assignments required collaboration between students, including the discussing of ideas. Students were encouraged to draw upon their native language peers for support within the group, but also had to communicate together in English in order to complete tasks. Sembene gave the following example of a typical assignment:

They can give us a question, OK on one paper and we all translate it in our languages. Sometimes, we might learn from each other how to say the word in their language, to just have fun and stuff. Or sometimes we just choose one word to like draw about it with our expression or like culture and stuff, and see how they are different from our perspective and language and culture (photo-elicitation, December 8, 2015).

According to Sembene, one of the benefits of working collaboratively in heterogeneous groups is “you all have a different perspective about one idea which is really interesting” (photo-elicitation, December 8, 2015). Engaging in these multilingual practices was a way students showed reciprocity, by actually taking turns learning one another’s expressions and perspectives. A recent topic he and his classmates discussed was “how other people treat you inside the school. Okay, Africans did ours, and they did theirs, which was really, really different. How we see other people treat us and how they see [us] treat them, which was really interesting” (photo-elicitation, December 8, 2015). Whereas there is the recognition that different groups exist, and that these groups have different perspectives on how people in school are treated, Sembene considers these differences to be “really interesting” and an asset to the learning of everyone.

When I asked Kadija about places where she felt most comfortable, she identified school as one of these places. She explained why:

I love learning new things, and I like to speak up my mind and say what I think and things like that. So, when we learn about a topic or whatever, I'm just like I don't agree with you. So that's the thing, I guess that's why I like it because when you stay at home, you're watching TV, but when you come [to school] it's different people with different ideas, and then you get to put your own, and you're trying to show that my idea is, not better than yours but... I just like the vibe that school has" (interview, November 2, 2015).

Kadija's differentiation between the private space of home and the public space of school highlights her sense of school as a mini-polity where different ideas can be debated and discussed. Coming to school is a way for Kadija to cross the boundary between home and the public sphere of school where she can engage in civic discourse. A critical factor contributing to Kadija's and Sembene's sense of civic belonging at school are opportunities to dialogue with diverse peers.

A limitation on the school's ability to enact the stated principles of heterogeneity and collaboration was the over-representation of Latino/a students, who make up approximately 75% of the students. Therefore, it was difficult for teachers to create heterogeneous student groups with respect to native language. Although English was encouraged as a common means of communication, Spanish was often used by the majority of students when completing academic tasks, as well as during informal conversation. Jennifer, a student from the Dominican Republic, acknowledged the predominance of Spanish, but also explained how she made a special effort to use English as a means of including the non-Spanish-speaking students:

Yeah like my entire class is Hispanic. There's just one girl, she's Arabic. But then the rest, we're all Hispanic, so... sometimes I do forget, and I speak a lot of Spanish, but every

time I'm talking to her I try to speak more English, and when we have to do group things, I try to speak more in English so she can understand what we're saying. She can participate with us (interview, November 19, 2015).

In a separate interview, another Dominican student, Nicole, had a similar response when I asked her how she works with her other students during group work [Sophia is an Arabic-speaking student who was also a participant in the research]:

You know Sophia, right? She's in the table with me, Jennifer, Sophia, and another guy. Sometimes we do speak Spanish in front of her, but we try to, you know if we say something in Spanish, we try to translate or we try to talk, we try to get everyone to know what we're talking about (interview, November 13, 2015).

Jennifer and Nicole's decision to use English so that everyone in the group could understand what was being said and be a part of the conversation is an important example of how they reinforced the norm of collaboration and inclusion that is one of the school's guiding principles. Moreover, as members of the Spanish-speaking majority, bridging linguistic boundaries involved an empathic understanding of how one girl in their class who speaks Arabic might be feeling. Whereas Nicole and Jennifer may have found it easier to speak Spanish, they sacrificed some of their own comfort in order to include the whole group. Developing the capacity to treat the good of others as part of one's self-interest, is a necessary habit of democratic citizenship. It is also an important aspect of how some participants developed a sense of civic belonging in school.

However, despite the effort made by Spanish-speaking students like Jennifer and Nicole to be inclusive, some African students expressed frustration that English wasn't used more often. According to Amadou, he attended an "international" school so he could learn English, but now,

he explained, “I wonder why I come [to an international school]... because in class nobody speaking English. If they're speaking in Spanish, how are we all going to help each other learn English?” (group interview, October 15, 2015). Amadou viewed learning English as necessary to his academic success. He described why: “If I don't speak English that's going to hurt you later like to pass your test, to pass your Regents exam. If you don't speak English how are you going to do your class work?” (photo-elicitation, December 8, 2015). According to Amadou, in order to improve his English, he and Assiatou chose not to speak to each other in school in their home language, and when given the choice to take a French language translation of their science test, they chose the English version instead.

Amadou and Assiatou preferred English not only because it benefitted them academically, but also in order to feel socially included. Assiatou explained that when the Spanish-speaking students don't use English,

you're going to feel bad, and you're just going to sit there, you're not going to understand what they're saying. But in your mind, you're going to think they're talking about you, but maybe they might be talking about something else (focus group, November 16, 2015).

Amadou also worried that Spanish-speaking students might be saying things about him: “I wonder why they're talking, are they talking about me or what? So that's why I don't like [to be] the only African at the table. I never accept that” (photo-elicitation, December 8, 2015). The linguistic boundaries between students sometimes contributed to distrust between students.

Although Jennifer and Nicole showed a desire to be inclusive in their use of English, linguistic minority students could still feel excluded. This finding demonstrates how experiences of place differ based on social location. Black (African and Haitian) students make up 18% of the student

population. As part of the Spanish-speaking majority, it may be easier for Jennifer and Nicole to bridge the boundaries of difference and to exhibit social trust in others.

In a focus group composed of three African youth and one Yemeni student, participants talked about a series of fights between Dominican and Yemeni students, which helps illustrate how boundaries could lead to distrust. Administrators handled the dispute by physically separating the students in order to listen to their side of the story. Yasser, the Yemeni student, was critical of this approach of holding separate discussions with each group of students before deciding on a punishment. Yasser believed the outcome always favored the Dominican students “because we don’t know what they’re saying, and they don’t know what we say” (focus group, December 2, 2015). Yasser felt that it would be better to bring both groups of students together in the same room to resolve the issue. Sembene agreed with Yasser, citing his experience as a peer mediator to argue that resolving conflicts between students worked better when both sides could address one another. By separating the two groups of students, administrators at the school reinforced distrust, and literally maintained boundaries to separate students. According to the students in the focus group, working out the problem together in the same room would have ensured that whatever punishment was decided upon resulted from an equal hearing from both groups of students. This also had important implications for these students’ sense of civic belonging, which was undermined by the enforcement of physical boundaries between students and the perception that some students might receive preferential treatment.

Another reason why Yasser didn’t trust the administrators was that he believed they “defend them [the Dominican students], the school defends them. We don’t have nobody working in the school in high levels who can defend us, no” (focus group, December 2, 2015). At WCHS, some of the teachers were bilingual, speaking both Spanish and English. However,

only one adult, a teacher's aide, spoke Arabic. According to Yasser, it was unfair that there were no Arabic-speaking teachers "in a high level." Yasser's concern that the Dominican students might misconstrue what happened, as well as his perception that Arabic-speaking students were not well represented by school administrators, highlights the importance of equal public recognition to the creation of social trust. Having more Arabic-speaking teachers would have afforded Yasser greater public recognition in the space of school, and contributed to his sense of civic belonging there.

The challenges that arose at WCHS with respect to resolving conflicts between students and working collaboratively to complete academic projects reflect the unique social context in which students sought to develop civic belonging. In a super-diverse school environment like WCHS, where Spanish, not English, was the language spoken by the majority of students, the preference for English among the students from African countries takes on a particular meaning. Rather than be interpreted as a means of assimilating into the cultural mainstream, or a turning away from home cultural practices, their preference for English in the school setting can be interpreted as an attempt to create social trust by bridging linguistic difference. This does not mean that students did not also view learning English as necessary for their future academic success, or view speaking English as one means of joining the American cultural mainstream. However, speaking English carried a particular social significance with respect to civic belonging at WCHS. Speaking English in this social context was a way to include everyone in the school and generate social trust in the context of linguistic difference.

Chapter conclusions

As mini-polities, the schools my participants attended were places where they could negotiate boundaries in order to create social trust and civic belonging. When school functioned

as a mini-polity effectively, youth were able to develop a social connection, or bonding social capital, with peers like themselves. These could be friends who shared the same religion, or African ancestry. Forming trusting relationships with peers also created new forms of civic belonging that transcended national belonging to either the U.S. or their home countries. Another border the youth crossed was between teachers and students to create caring relationships. The relationships not only contributed to their academic success, but also their ability to empathize with others, challenge social hierarchies and become civically involved. Finally, the youth cross linguistic boundaries and created bridging social capital while doing collaborative group work. Students used these opportunities to learn about perspectives different from their own, and to debate ideas with people with whom they disagreed. This, too, added to their civic belonging.

However, examples of distrust show how school sometimes failed to function harmoniously as a mini-polity in which they could feel a sense of belonging. These instances occurred when boundaries were upheld, and when all students didn't experience equal recognition in the space of school. When Spanish-speaking students chose not to use English, the non-Spanish speaking minority felt socially excluded. When students of different linguistic group were physically separated to resolve disputes, the also led to distrust and a lack of faith in administrators to represent the interests of all students equitably. These instances of distrust in school foreshadow the significant obstacles to civic belonging in the neighborhood context, which is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 5 – Public (Mis)recognition In the Neighborhood Community

In the previous chapter I discussed ways in which my participants negotiated boundaries to develop a sense of civic belonging in school. In school the youths created social trust with their peers by creating regional identities, with teachers through the establishment of caring relations, and finally by crossing cultural and linguistic boundaries to develop empathy and perspective-taking with their classmates. In doing so they were able to extend the boundaries of trust to include more people in their school community and feel like they belonged. In this chapter I explore how my participants develop civic belonging in the context of their neighborhood communities. Are there sufficient opportunities for the youth to build social trust in their neighborhood communities? How does difference function in the everyday lives of these youth outside school, and can it be bridged in order to create belonging?

Yuval-Davis (2006) distinguishes between three different levels of belonging: social locations, identifications and emotional attachments, and ethical and political values. She argues that “belonging tends to be naturalized, and becomes articulated and politicized only when it is threatened in some way. The politics of belonging comprises specific political projects aimed at constructing belonging in particular ways” (p 197). Imagining themselves as part of the democratic polity was part of how these youths attempted to construct places of civic belonging in the context of their neighborhoods and other public spaces, including parks, museums, and libraries. However, their ability to feel a sense of belonging in these public places was constrained by a politics of belonging that denied recognition of their religious and linguistic identities. Unlike school, where the youth were able to bridge cultural and linguistic difference, in the out-of-school context, skin color, religion, and accent become fixed markers of difference

used to limit their sense of belonging. In resistance to these exclusions, my participants affiliated themselves at different scales other than the imagined “national” community. In some contexts, the youth eschew belonging to the U.S., choosing other forms of belonging that they view as being more inclusive and accepting of difference.

The youths’ civic identities were also shaped by opportunities to realize their authentic selves. Adolescence is a critical period in which young people try on self-definitions independent of their parents, family and adult authorities. However, the identity narratives youth tell about themselves are co-constructed with others based on their social locations and membership in different collectivities. Taylor (1994) argues that we are dependent on others for the construction of our identities, civic and otherwise, because they are formed in dialogue with others. Feeling a sense of belonging and developing a civic identity depends in part on having one’s native language, culture or religion recognized in the public sphere. As a consequence, “a person can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves” (p. 25).

In a variety of ways, the youth in this study confronted a politics of (mis)recognition that suppressed differences in religion or language. In response, the youth draw upon a multiplicity of community memberships to develop a sense of civic belonging. As Appiah (1994) cogently argues, “we make up selves from a toolkit of options made available by our culture and society. We do make choices, but we do not determine the options among which we choose” (p. 155). These youths constructed multifaceted identity narratives as African, Dominican, immigrant, American, reader, U.S. citizen, Muslim, Senegalese and New Yorker, to name but a few. It is from among this diverse “toolkit” that the youths struggled to stay true to what they believed to be their “authentic” selves. Each of these different identities provide what Appiah

refers to as “scripts: narratives that people can use in shaping their life plans and in telling their life stories” (p. 160). Appiah shows how life scripts allow people to narrate their lives in ways that make sense to them. Positive life-scripts function as counter-narratives to the dominant narratives that are used by those with power to oppress marginalized groups. The immigrant youth in this study sought to create their own counter-narratives of what it meant to belong, not only in America, but also in spaces they carve out for their self-fulfillment.

I begin this chapter by considering how and why the youth seek out reciprocal relationships in their social encounters with neighbors and peers. I find that their social location, including language and nativity, serve as barriers to creating social trust. Another obstacle to belonging is their identification as Muslim, which is mis-recognized in public spaces. I conclude by explaining how my participants carve out spaces of belonging by forming an emotional connection to place.

Mistrustful neighbors

Whereas school provided my participants with structured opportunities to create both bonding and bridging social capital with peers who speak other languages or practice different religions, in the context of their neighborhoods they struggled to build social trust. A significant obstacle to interacting socially in their neighborhoods was their emergent bilingualism, which was a significant marker of difference. Whereas in school everyone was similarly positioned with respect to learning English, in their neighborhoods, they could be laughed at because of their accents, which made them feel “shy” and reluctant to speak. Bakary expressed his frustration that, although he knows four different languages – English, Soninke, Mandingo and French – he is judged solely on his ability to speak English. With respect to language, being able to speak English is used as the single criterion for determining who belongs and who does not.

An incident occurring one day when Bakary and his two Bangladeshi classmates were taking photos in a park for this research project illustrates this point. The Bangladeshi students were taking photos of a tree when a group of youths passing by became upset because they thought they were being photographed. When the Bangladeshi youth were unable to explain in English what they were actually photographing, a boy asked them accusingly why they didn't know English. In reflecting back on the incident, Bakary questioned the assumption that they should be able to explain in English:

I was about to tell him why don't you speak no Bangla? Because you know it's not like he don't want to [speak], he was not used to [English]. So, people don't understand, a lot of people having those kinds of misunderstandings (interview, April 20, 2016).

The misunderstanding that Bakary refers to is that immigrants like himself and his Bangladeshi friends are unwilling to learn English. Unlike school, where, according to Sembene, students “might learn from each other how to say the word in their language, to just have fun and stuff,” (photo-elicitation, December 8, 2015) in their neighborhood communities, when they spoke a language other than English, they were positioned outside the boundaries of belonging. In order to belong, the onus of responsibility was placed on Bakary and his classmates to learn English, rather than Americans to learn Soninke or Bangla.

The unwillingness of the English-speaking youth to use a means of communication other than English in the public space of the park shows how the lack of reciprocity in the social encounter made it very difficult to create social trust. The ability to trust another person requires some faith in that person's willingness to reciprocate in times of need. However, the English-speaking youth would not lend a helping hand. Moreover, in the context of unequal power relations, as was the case here, the creation of social trust requires the most advantaged person to

make some concessions to the least advantaged. As members of the linguistic majority, the English-speaking youth made no such overture. Instead, they reinforced linguistic boundaries to exclude the Bangladeshi youth. In this everyday social interaction, these immigrant youths were positioned outside the imaginary boundaries of the political community.

The formation of linguistic boundaries to exclude contrasts sharply with how Bakary drew upon his linguistic repertoire in his native country of The Gambia, as well as in school here in New York, to include others. In these social contexts, as a speaker of four different languages, Bakary was often in the position of being able to speak in whichever language the other speaker was most comfortable with. Rather than insist on the language he was most comfortable speaking, he would switch between speaking English, Wolof, Mandinka, and Soninke, in order to be inclusive. Bakary explained it this way:

Because in Gambia always when I see my friends, we don't speak English that much, we just speak Wolof, Mandinka, Soninke, it depends how the friend, if it's Mandinka, we speak Mandinka, if it's a Wolof, we speak Wolof (photo elicitation, April 6, 2016).

In his school in New York, Bakary also adjusted his use of language based on the social context: “I sometimes [speak English] with the teachers, but if one of my friends from Africa, we just speak their language because it's way easier for them” (photo elicitation, April 6, 2016). Being in the position of knowing several languages made it possible for Bakary to accommodate the other speaker in this way. This was an important show of reciprocity in order to build social trust. As we saw in the previous chapter, some Spanish-speaking students made an effort to include their peers by using English as a common language so that everyone could be a part of the conversation.

Bakary resisted the notion that belonging in America should be conditional on knowing English in his rejoinder, “Why don’t you speak no Bangla”? Bakary imagines the democratic polity to be a place where linguistic differences can co-exist and where borders can be straddled in order to achieve greater understanding between people. Danielle Allen (2004) uses the metaphor of “wholeness” to characterize how citizens in a democratic society can envision themselves as part of “the people.” The metaphor of “wholeness” recognizes that “the people” making up the public sphere are a “complex, intricate, and differentiated body” (p. 17). As Allen eloquently puts it, “the metaphor of wholeness can guide us into a conversation about how to develop habits of citizenship that can help a democracy bring trustful coherence out of division without erasing or suppressing difference” (p. 20). For example, “a focus on the wholeness of the citizenry, might allow for the development of forms of citizenship that focus on... multilingualism, where all citizens expect to learn each other’s languages” (p. 20). This was the essence of Bakary’s challenge to his English-speaking peers to learn Bangla, instead of insisting on English as the pre-determined means of reaching a common understanding. Being positioned outside the imagined political community of the U.S. for not speaking fluent English limited their ability to create social trust and, in turn, their sense of civic belonging.

Another way in which the boundaries of belonging were maintained in their neighborhood communities was through being labeled an “immigrant.” Several of the youth from The Gambia, Senegal and Guinea spoke about the word “immigrant” being used as a kind of insult to inflict harm. This often came from African Americans. When I asked Amadou what he thought of when he heard the word “immigrant” he said,

That's really hard, it's going to hurt me that to call me immigrant. African call the African immigrant... the African people who were born here. They call the other person

immigrant. It's true, like me if you call me immigrant that really going to affect me (interview, November 24, 2015).

The youth participants struggled to understand this form of social exclusion coming from peers with whom they shared a common African ancestry. For example, Fatoumata asked, “we all came from Africa, why are you calling me immigrant?” (group interview, October 15, 2015). To this Sembene added,

Like you know, they're Africans, but they were born here, so when they see their own, other African mates, they say they're immigrants... so, the fact that they don't speak English perfectly, they bully them as immigrants. They're like, immigrants are stupid, because they don't speak English (group interview, October 15, 2015).

Sembene’s comments illustrate the difficulties he and the other participants from African countries faced in extending the boundaries of trust to include African Americans in their neighborhood. In school these youths called themselves “African” as a means of creating a common identity and creating social trust rooted in their African ancestry. In their neighborhood communities, however, they were blocked from forming a social connection or creating trust with African Americans. Sembene’s use of the term “African mates” signals the potential connection he feels to African Americans in his neighborhood, but the feeling is not reciprocal. Instead of being included on the basis of their common ancestry, my participants were excluded, or “bullied,” because they didn’t “speak English perfectly.”

My participants challenged the use of the label “immigrant” to exclude and impose boundaries in a number of ways. A way they did this was by referring to their home countries of Guinea and Senegal as examples of how to create more inclusive public spaces where social trust

can develop. According to Amadou, in Guinea “they don’t care if you’re an immigrant or not” (group interview, October 15, 2015). Sembene, who is Senegalese, went on to explain further:

We're not going to tell you to go back to your country or why are you here. We don't do that in my country. So, no matter where I go in Africa they will still treat me like I'm from that area, like I'm from that country, there's no immigrant or something like that (group interview, October 15, 2015).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Sembene was born in the U.S., but spent a period of seven years living with his grandmother in Senegal. Despite having U.S. citizenship, he referred to Senegal as “my country” where there is no such thing as “immigrant.” Sembene identifies himself with Senegal, where people were given the same recognition, no matter where they were born. He sees Senegal, and all of Africa, as a place where boundaries do not function to exclude people, and feels that no matter where he goes in Africa he will be treated like he is “from that area.” Moreover, according to my participants, immigrants offer opportunities for learning and growth. According to Assiatou, in Guinea-Bissau “we’re going to be like, we have a person that come from this [other] country, so we can have more experience about that place, how they live there” (group interview, October 15, 2015). Amadou, Assiatou and Sembene therefore construct an understanding of belonging in their home country that is welcoming of difference. However, in the context of their Bronx neighborhoods, their experience of knowing another language, or living in another part of the world, was not welcomed as an asset. Instead, there were limited opportunities for the creation of social trust through the mutual exchange of cultural and linguistic knowledge.

Public misrecognition of Muslim identities

I met with three Muslim students, from Guinea and Senegal, during a focus group meeting days after the Paris terror attacks in November, 2015. Conversations that had begun in classrooms about the events that day made their way into our interview. I invited the students to share their thoughts about what had happened in Paris and how it could affect their lives here in New York. Sembene offered this initial reaction to the terror attack: “When I saw the news on the TV I just think of Muslim people have another problem because you know whenever these things happen, they blame us Muslim people” (group interview, November 16, 2015). Sembene’s use of the phrase “us Muslim people” to describe himself shows how he drew new boundaries to identify himself with Muslims in different parts of the world. Sembene’s sense of civic belonging was thus shaped by events occurring in Paris because of a social connection he felt with other Muslims. Despite being separated by geographic space, he viewed their lives as interconnected, which included the blaming of all Muslims for the terrorist acts. Assiatou also felt connected to Muslims around the world. She believed that Islam is the same religion irrespective of nation-state borders: “If you go all the way to France... the thing that is written in [the Koran] is the same, it never change, and the definition never be different... Allah is the god” (interview, November 15, 2015). The fact that the tenets of Islam are independent of geography, meant that Assiatou felt she could go anywhere there are Muslims and feel a part of that community (Levitt, 2007). It is also possible that their affiliation with Muslim people in other parts of the world was heightened by the terror attacks. Yuval-Davis contends that “the emotional components of people’s constructions of themselves and their identities” can become activated when they are threatened (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 202).

For the youth from Senegal and Guinea, their identities as Muslim also intersected in significant ways with their membership in the African diaspora. Their transnational ties spanned not only the U.S. and their home countries, but France as well. The sense of belonging and exclusion Assiatou and Sembene felt in the U.S. was shaped by their relationships with family in Paris, who told them stories of being stereotyped as Muslims. For instance, Sembene said after the attacks on the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in January of 2015 his cousin who lives in France faced increased scrutiny for being Muslim and wearing the hijab: “when she getting into the trains, because you know she wears a hijab, and when she get into the train, every time people start looking at her” (group interview, October 15, 2015). I asked Assiatou if she ever had a similar experience wearing the hijab here in New York. She said, yes, “like if you come to the train and then there's a seat, and if you're trying to sit there, they're just going to move over” (group interview, October 15, 2015). The ways in which Assiatou made sense of her experiences as a Muslim female riding the New York subway were influenced by her understanding of how others in her diasporic network faced exclusion, including stories of job discrimination, or the barring of women in hijab from certain shops in France. This example of the influence of transnational ties shows how the process by which these youths developed a sense of civic belonging was more nuanced than being able or unable to imagine themselves as part of “the people” making up the U.S. nation-state. As part of the African diaspora my participants also imagined themselves between and beyond the boundaries of any one nation-state, whether that be the U.S. or their native country (Lukose, 2007).

Anti-Muslim rhetoric in the U.S. escalated after twelve people were killed in a mass shooting motivated by terrorism on December 2, 2015, in San Bernardino, CA. The attacks in America prompted then presidential candidate, Donald Trump to call “for a total and complete

shutdown of Muslims entering the United States” (www.donaldjtrump.com). Assiatou responded to Trump’s proposed ban by saying, “You see how America be saying all Muslim people are terrorists right? In America, the problem is if someone did something, they against all the people that from that country” (group interview, December 2, 2015). Several of the Muslim students viewed the scapegoating of Muslims as a means for politicians, such as Donald Trump, to gain political power. As Sembene explained,

That's why the government or like the presidential candidates, are having so much power because they are trying to make them hate Muslims... Because they want to hear him saying, Muslims are bad, Mexicans are this, he's trying to blame the problems of the country on the people that have nothing to do with that. They're making our economy this, they ruin our country, so let's get rid of them (group interview, December 2, 2015).

Sembene argued that Trump is turning Americans against Muslims and Mexican immigrants living in the U.S., by blaming them for the country’s economic woes, in order to gain popularity and power. This illustrates Sembene’s understanding of how the presidential candidates politicized belonging in order appeal to voters. According to Yuval-Davis (2006), “the politics of belonging comprises specific political projects aimed at constructing belonging in particular ways to particular collectivities...” (p. 197). Sembene recognized Donald Trump’s plans to build a wall on the Mexico border and increase the deportation of undocumented immigrants as an example of a political project of belonging aimed at the level of identifications and emotional attachments. In calling Mexicans “rapists” and “criminals” Trump sought to incite fear of immigrants in America in order to, as Sembene put it, “get rid of them.” His campaign slogan, “Make America Great Again,” promotes an identity narrative of America that recalls a mythic past in which America was an Empire in the world (Abu El-Haj, 2015). In Sembene’s view

politicians, like Trump, who are trying to make Americans hate Muslims, had eroded the social trust between people. Xenophobia and the stereotyping of Muslims made it more difficult for my participants to build trust with others in their neighborhoods and communities, or to be seen by others as trustworthy.

In addition to these examples in public discourse of the portrayal of Muslim people as not belonging in America, students also shared more subtle examples of the ways in which they feel Islam is misrepresented in the public sphere. In a focus group of all Muslim youth, Assiatou shared her photo of the mosque she attends in the Bronx (Figure 11). The photo shows the front



Figure 11: Photo of mosque

of the mosque, which is located at the ground level of a multi-story building. The awning identifies it as “Masjid Quba.” The door to the mosque, which is about a foot off the ground, is missing a step. Adjacent to the mosque is an area fenced in with barbed wire. In response to seeing the photo, Yasser asked Assiatou, “Why did you take a picture of a masjid in New York? That’s not how a masjid looks in Muslim countries” (group interview, December 2, 2015). Several students quickly took out their cell phones to show me images of mosques in other parts of the world, all of which included minarets and ornate architectural features.

The explanation Assiatou offered for why the mosque she attends doesn't look the same as mosques in Muslim-majority countries was, "It don't look like a mosque... so you see it's different because here, you know, this is back home country, but this is a country we don't belong to" (group interview, December 2, 2015). Assiatou's comment illustrates the importance of public recognition of her Muslim identity to her sense of civic belonging. In Assiatou's view, the fact that the mosque she attended looked different in physical appearance from those in Guinea, was concrete evidence of her not belonging. Her explanation demonstrates something important about her identity and sense of belonging surfaced by photo-elicitation. As Croghan, Griffin, Hunter & Phoenix (2008) argue "particular kinds of identity work are occasioned by being confronted in an interview by a photograph that participants have been asked to take as a reflection of their lives and identities" (p. 350). In the focus group Yasser confronted Assiatou about how she (mis)represented mosques and Islam in her photo. In response, Assiatou repaired the image of her Muslim identity by explaining how the photography didn't authentically represent Islam. In doing so, Assiatou demonstrated what she considered to be restrictions on Muslim belonging in America, as evidenced by her comment that "they just don't like maybe Muslims" (group interview, December 2, 2015). Moreover, the responses of the other Muslim youth in the focus group to Assiatou's photograph demonstrates how they shared her experience of misrecognition.

It is possible that the students were also drawing a link between the lack of suitable places to pray, and conflicts over Muslims' claims to space. In 2010, a controversy erupted over the proposed building of an Islamic cultural center near the World Trade Center. Moreover, since the 2000 passage of a law that prohibits municipalities from discriminating against any religion by denying them permits to build places of worship, 13 different cases have been brought by the

Justice Department, 11 of which have involved Muslims (Foderaro, 2016). A recent case involved the construction of a mosque in nearby New Jersey. The proposed mosque was designed to blend into the existing architectural landscape, such as by foregoing a “traditional dome” and creating minarets that looked like chimneys (Foderaro, 2016).

While zoning laws in population dense places like New York City may lead to different kinds of disputes over building permits, these controversies may have created the perception among my participants that their mosques also had to mimic surrounding buildings. When I asked them why they thought mosques like the ones in their home countries couldn’t be built here in New York, Yasser said, “Well we are not allowed to create a mosque like this... There's rules” (group interview, December 2, 2015). It wasn’t clear what “rules” Yasser was referring to, but he may have been aware of zoning laws that would have prevented it. Assiatou offered further explanation: “They don’t want Muslims to build. But yeah, they just don’t like maybe Muslims” (group interview, December 2, 2015). The debate among my participants about the public representation of Islam shows how claims to space are linked to political projects that construct belonging in particular ways. Being denied the opportunity to have their Muslim identities made visible translated into a diminished sense of belonging to the U.S. and an inability to imagine themselves as part of the democratic “whole.”

Despite feeling like Muslim places of worship did not get adequate public recognition, the mosque was also a place where their religious, ethnic and linguistic identities were sustained. In other words, the mosque was an important place of refuge given the misrepresentation of Muslims in the public sphere. Moreover, going to the mosque to pray was not only a means to feel religious belonging, but also to maintain ties to ethnic and linguistic peers, as well as family. For example, Assiatou and Amadou, both of whom migrated from Guinea, reportedly attended

different mosques, because Fulani was used in one, and Mandingo in the other. The use of one language or another in some cases therefore dictated which mosque to attend. Bakary offered this explanation for why he chose to attend a mosque with other Gambians: “All the mosques are the same, but if the Gambians are the ones that built the mosque, so people from Gambia would like to go see people that you know, to be chatting. I like that” (interview, April 20, 2016). Bakary’s use of the mosque to see people he knew shows how in some cases the boundaries of belonging could be drawn in closer to create civic belonging. In this case, being Muslim and Gambian created a sense of familiarity that brought Bakary comfort. We can contrast this with how the youth drew upon their diasporic and Muslim identities to extend their boundaries of belonging to include Muslims living in Paris in response to the terror attacks. Therefore, how the youth negotiated and drew boundaries changed based on the social or historical context. In response to the terror attacks, the youth were drawn to other Muslims with whom they felt a shared fate, and adjusted the boundaries of belonging in order to feel included with them (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

A counter-example of how the youth found public recognition for Islam helps illustrate the important relationship between a sense of civic belonging and their collective identity as Muslim. During a focus group, several Muslim youths spoke about a park in the Bronx that is used by Muslims during Eid. According to Yasser, during this time the park is reserved for prayer, and is regulated by police to ensure that only Muslims enter: “Nobody allowed to go there in the holiday, the Muslim holidays, only the Muslims. If we need it. And then, some officers do their job and don't let nobody come in if he's not Muslim” (group interview, December 2, 2015). The youth considered this significant because they were able to claim a public space for the purpose of expressing their religious identities. The need for a park in which

to pray was proof of the large number of Muslims that live in the Bronx and celebrate Eid; so many that they could fill an entire city park.

Moreover, Yasser noted that the park was a public space by referring to it as a “government park”; it was an institutionally sanctioned space in the neighborhood community where Muslims could be visible and express their religious beliefs without fear of exclusion. Yasser also called attention to the use of police officers to make sure only Muslims entered the park, which he referred to as officers doing “their job.” Therefore, Yasser interprets the enforcement of the park’s use as a space for Muslim prayer as a form of public recognition of Muslims and their right to exist in public spaces. This is another way in which boundaries could function to create a sense of civic belonging, in this case by physically keeping non-Muslims out. Therefore, the youths both extended and drew in boundaries more closely to create civic belonging. This demonstrates the importance of opportunities for the youths to create social trust with people who were like them, as well as people who were different, or bonding and bridging social capital. It was important to the Muslim youth that they have public spaces that were reserved for them, according to Yasser, “if we need it.” This did not preclude being able to extend the boundaries of trust to include non-Muslims at other times and places.

Emotional investments in public space

The use of the city park as a way to claim space and be publically recognized for their religious identities highlights how the youth constructed places of belonging in their neighborhood communities despite the civic exclusions they faced. In addition to the struggle for public recognition, the youth did not experience their neighborhood communities as caring spaces. Several participants spoke about the lack of caring they experienced between neighbors.

This can be contrasted with the caring relationships with peers and teachers the youths nurtured in school. Nicole was critical of her Bronx neighborhood, because

You never know when to help somebody or when to do something for somebody because they're always, in their own thing, and they just don't look at anybody. Like for example, something happens to a person, like they feel sick or anything. In D.R. everybody's going to be like oh, let me help. But here, they just see you there, that you're not OK and they don't do nothing, they just keep walking. And for me, I don't know it feels better when you, because I like to help, and I would like other people to help me if I'm in a situation like that (interview, November 8, 2015).

The significance of feeling a part of a caring community to her sense of belonging was evident in her advice to other immigrants to the Bronx: “Be a person that cares and helps, not only yourself but others, because, hey, **if we don't help others then we're never going to be able to do anything big**” (interview, November 14, 2015). Nicole calls attention to two aspects of “caring” that matter to her sense of belonging and sense of civic efficacy: caring *for* and caring *about* (Noddings, 1992). Caring *for* others, Nicole explained, included helping others who are sick. Unlike school, where teachers cared for students by showing empathy or fighting for their right to extracurricular opportunities, in her neighborhood people didn't care for each other. Nicole experienced a lack of social connection in the ways people “don't look at anybody,” or “just keep walking when they see someone hurt.” Caring for others also carried with it the expectation that others will reciprocate. As Nicole explains, she liked to help, because she would hope that others would help her in that situation. Caring *about* others reflects a different, but related, type of investment in making the community better, which she refers to as the ability to “do anything

big.” Caring *for* and caring *about* are interrelated. By being a person who cares “not only [about] yourself,” it is possible to make the community where you belong a better place.

Kadija also felt that in the Bronx people “cared less” than she was accustomed to in her home country of Senegal. When I asked Kadija what was important for someone to know who is moving from Senegal to the Bronx, she said, Senegal

is different because there it's like, you care about each other, but in here, I'm not saying nobody cares, it's just like everybody is just for your own, for yourself, you care most about yourself, it's like 99% of the time you care about yourself. And there it's kind of different because... everybody knows everybody (interview, November 2, 2015).

Like Nicole, Kadija made comparisons to her home country to talk about how in the Bronx people only care about themselves instead of caring about each other. Kadija believes the fact that everybody knows everybody makes people care more in Senegal. When I asked Kadija to give an example of this she said “it's really rare that you know two person, and that they don't know each other in a way, or they're not related in a way. And here it's like everybody's a stranger” (interview, November 2, 2015). The sense of place Kadija had of her neighborhood community, where people felt like strangers, contrasts sharply with her school, where students could feel part of a family even if they were from different countries.

It is possible to learn how the youth created civic belonging by attending not only to the spaces where they felt excluded, but also places where they felt comfortable. As has already been discussed, the Muslim youth created civic belonging by claiming their right to space in public parks. Youth civic belonging in parks also depended on feelings of safety. A photo taken by Nicole shows some benches in a park that she passes on her way to and from school that was built to replace the old Yankee Stadium (Figure 12). As Nicole explained, “I sit there for no



Figure 12: Photo of benches

reason sometimes. So, I really enjoy it there. It's, like, quiet" (photo elicitation, January 7, 2016). The organization of spaces can facilitate or discourage mutual exchanges between urban dwellers depending on whether they promote a feeling of security. For example, urban planners have "designed benches, fountains, lighting systems, maps and well-marked pathways, making spaces both inviting and easy to leave, in order to encourage us out of our houses and back into interaction" (Allen, 2004, p.166). One can recognize in Nicole's photo the park's openness, the light post, and it's being conveniently located on Nicole's path to and from school, that make it an inviting public space to sit without need for any specific purpose other than "to see around, the people walking" (photo elicitation, January 7, 2016).

In order to differentiate between spaces where they felt a sense of belonging, and those they avoided, the youth frequently used the word "crazy" to describe places where they felt uncomfortable, and "calm" to describe places where they could relax and feel secure. Moreover, not only did they use the word "calm" to describe places, but also specifically identified with calm places. For example, in explaining why she likes parks, Nicole said, "I don't know if you know this, but I really enjoy calm things" (interview, November 14, 2015). Kadija also expressed an affinity for "calm" places when she described places where she feels safe and comfortable: "I



Figure 13: Photo of library

just like it more when it's calm" (interview, November 2, 2015). Whereas their identifying themselves with "calm" places may in part be a response to the noisy urban environment, it also related to their sense of safety and security in these places. For instance, when I asked Nicole to describe spaces that were "crazy," she said, "there are people, in the street, just running and screaming, and I've seen many people have fights there, and don't really like that" (photo elicitation, January 7, 2016). A place that both Nicole and Kadija described as "calm" and where they felt comfortable was the library. Nicole took a photograph of an image of a reading room from the library's website (Figure 13). The photo shows a large open space lined with bookshelves. In her description of the library, Nicole explained that "there are different sections, there's a section for kids, for teenagers, for adults." As Nicole explained, she enjoys the library because I love reading, and I love things that are calm. And relaxed. When I'm there I can travel to many places. You don't even have to read. So, if I'm not feeling well that is a place I can go and feel better (photo elicitation, January 7, 2016).

In calling attention to the existence of areas of the library designated for different users, Nicole highlights how the differentiation of the space may have given her a greater sense of security. Moreover, the openness of the space resembles the park where she also found quietude. The

spaciousness of both the park and library make these welcoming places. Finally, Nicole’s comment that reading allowed her to “travel to many places” illustrates the ways in which she constructed the library as a place where she was able to transcend spatial boundaries and go to places to feel better. In offering a space for quiet reflection and for reading, “calm” spaces such as the library, offered a kind of escape from the “craziness” of their neighborhoods.

Parks were places where they could become emotionally invested, and find solace when they were feeling badly. According to Nicole, Central Park was a place where you could go to Just be yourself and think about anything, and relax and enjoy nature. So, I really like that place because I really like thinking about things. So, when I’m feeling a little confused about something, that is a personal problem or something, I really like being in that place because that makes me feel very calm and relaxed, I can think a lot (interview, November 8, 2015).

Nicole was able to carve out a space in Central Park where she could just be herself without being scrutinized by others. She describes the park like a friend who is there for you when you just need someone to listen and not judge. In Central Park Nicole is able to find the mental space she needs to just think about things and feel calm. Like Nicole, Sembene also considered parks to



Figure 14: Photo of grasses



Figure 15: Photo of Highline

be places where he could go when he was feeling upset. Sembene took several photos of the Highline (Figures 14 and 15), a park in Manhattan, because “when I’m depressed or, not sad, but a little off I just like to go. Okay, like, when I see people around me, nature and stuff, I get really happy” (photo elicitation, December 8, 2016). Both Nicole and Sembene refer to “nature” as nurturing their sense of self and emotional well-being. Parks function as public places where these youths can develop civic belonging through an emotional investment in and social connection to the human and natural elements of places.

Another reason why parks may have been significant in the lives of the participants was because they could be regulated and structured spaces, creating a greater sense of security and predictability necessary for their belonging. Jennifer took several photographs of a park from her apartment window that adjoined her apartment building (Figure 16). All of Jennifer’s photos were taken from her apartment, looking out her apartment window, or of images from the Internet. The fact that she chose not to leave the safety and security of her apartment to take any photos speaks to her discomfort in her neighborhood.

Several of her photos were taken the day after a snowfall, and showed children and adults playing, making snowmen, and a woman skiing. In discussing the park, Jennifer explained that



Figure 16: Photo of park in the snow



Figure 17: Photo of swimming beach

she no longer felt comfortable going there, even to walk her dog, because teenagers used the park to drink alcohol, leading to fights that spilled over into the neighborhood. Jennifer contrasted this park with another one that she and her family visited about an hour's drive outside of New York City, where there is a lake for swimming (Figure 17). Jennifer took a photo of an image from the Internet of the park because it was a place of importance to her. Here's what she said about it:

There are not a lot of bad things happening in there because the lifeguards are there. And there's a lot of security. And they don't let, [people] bring drinks, so I think that's one of the best things that they have because when people get drunk people get crazy. So, I think it's actually a **good public place** for people who go there. (photo elicitation, January 7, 2016).

The fact that there are lifeguards to enforce rules gave Jennifer a greater sense of security than the park in her neighborhood, where people fought. For Jennifer, what made this a “good public place,” is that people’s behavior was controlled and predictable, rather than “crazy.”

Another example of the significance of safety and security to the youths’ sense of belonging was their preference for areas of the city that were frequented by tourists, because they saw a greater police presence in those spaces. For instance, when I asked the youth where in the



Figure 18: Photo of Yankee Stadium

city they go with friends or family, outside the Bronx, several youths reported visiting Times Square. For example, Jennifer said she loved going to Times Square because “that’s one of the safest places because it’s so tourist, everybody that’s going there to take a picture so there’s a lot of security there. So yeah, I think that’s one of the safest places in New York” (photo elicitation, January 7, 2016). Another place where the youths felt safe around tourists was Yankee Stadium, in the Bronx. Nicole took a photograph of Yankee Stadium (Figure 18), which she could see from her apartment window, because she felt “really comfortable there” due to the fact that there were more police in the area: “It’s really safe. If you [play] music really loud, they tell you to turn it down. It’s calm, there’s always cops around here” (photo elicitation, January 7, 2016). Similar to parks, the organization of public space around Yankee Stadium, in this case the enforcement of rules surrounding the playing of music, is an example of how safety and security conferred a sense of belonging for the youth.

A final way in which the youth created civic belonging in public spaces was by highlighting opportunities for inter-cultural dialogue and crossing linguistic boundaries. Several participants had been on school field trips to the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), and spoke about the different cultures, including their own, that were represented there. Although



Figure 19: Photo of museum

some scholars have highlighted the colonial legacy of ethnology museums, which direct a Eurocentric gaze on “non-Western” cultures (Gaudelli & Mungur, 2014), the participants in this study viewed the space of the museum as attractive, because the objects in the museum reflected a diversity of cultures. Sembene, who took a photo of the museum (Figure 19) and completed a summer internship there said,

a lot of stuff in this museum came from like other countries, so this museum doesn't present just [the] United States, it presents I think everywhere. Africa, because they have African stuff, like Muslim stuff, everything. Like all the languages that are [spoken] in Africa, they have a list which is really awesome (photo elicitation, December 8, 2015).

Seeing “African stuff, Muslim stuff” brought public recognition to Sembene’s ethnic, linguistic and religious identities that made these spaces of civic belonging. Sembene may have also viewed the museum as significant in educating public audiences about the African continent, such as “all the languages” that are spoken there. Nicole also enjoyed going to AMNH. Her favorite space in the museum was “the hall that is cultural things. There’s things from African, the Middle East, many different things. I really enjoy knowing more about other cultures and everybody’s life” (interview, November 14, 2015). Nicole saw the museum as an opportunity to learn about cultures different from her own. This is the only mention of such opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue in neighborhood community spaces, as opposed to their school, where boundary crossing was encouraged. It is also important to point out that AMNH was not located in the neighborhoods where the youth lived; their experiences at the museum were primarily facilitated by the school through field trips and an internship. Sembene was the only participant to go to AMNH on his own to take photos for this research project.

Chapter conclusions

An examination of the places where the youth participants felt a sense of comfort, “calm” and security, including parks, libraries and museums, provides evidence of how they created public spaces of civic belonging in their neighborhoods. An avoidance of “crazy” places, that were loud and unpredictable, highlights the importance of feeling secure as a precondition to participating in the public sphere, and developing an emotional attachment to place. It is also necessary to consider the impact that political projects, including public discourses about immigrants circulating within the polity, had on the lived experiences of these youths and their enactments of citizenship. Their experiences of linguistic marginalization, being targeted as possible terror suspects, and not having their identities be recognized, increased their feelings of vulnerability relative to their native-born peers. In order for political friendship and reciprocity to flourish as a habit of citizenship, equitable self-interest between citizens must exist. This requires those in positions of power to accept some loss, or cede some of their own self-interest for collective well-being, something there was little evidence of in my participants’ interactions with neighbors. Finally, immigrant youth must be able to “imagine” themselves as part of the democratic “whole” if they are to develop trust in others. The myth of “one people” is a project that maintains political boundaries at the cost of social membership for those who continue to maintain transnational ties to their home countries. In the next chapter, I take up the notion of “home” and how the youth construct understandings of where home is, and what it means to be a “citizen” of a particular territory or national community.

Chapter 6 – Ties to Home

We don't know where is home. I mean everywhere is home, like home is just a place where you feel comfortable... where you feel safe... where you could go whenever you don't really feel good. We don't know where is home because most people they just refer to home as your house, like that's home. Or your home country or whatever... If we describe it that way, it's not everybody who felt good about going home, because I mean every day I'm so excited to go home, but... some people they would rather stay somewhere else than going home. So, it depends... (Kadija, interview, November 6, 2015).

In addition to school and the neighborhood community, home functioned as a third social context or place where the youth participants created civic belonging and constructed their identities.

Kadija highlights several important features of “home” in the quote above. She draws attention to how home is not a singular, fixed place of reference. It can be any place where you feel comfortable and safe, or seek refuge from the outside world when you “don’t feel really good.”

Kadija also recognizes the subjective of nature of what makes some people feel at home in a place. Whereas her apartment where her mother lives in the Bronx is one place that Kadija considers home, she points out that home can also refer to the country where one was born.

However, connections to the home country vary as well; one’s native country may not be a safe place for some immigrants to return to, due to violence, war, or economic struggle.

Kadija’s characterization of home as ambiguous aligns closely with how geographers Staeheli and Nagel (2006) conceptualize home:

‘Home’ is a bundle of contradictions. It conjures feelings of safety, belonging and connection. It can be a site of violence, oppression, and alienation. It is firmly rooted in place. It is an abstraction that extends beyond the walls of a house, linking people and relationships within the house with the external world. It is fixed and bounded. It is mobile and open (p. 1599).

This understanding of home as contradictory and subjective, as both solid and porous, as connected to the world beyond, raises an important set of questions regarding how the immigrant youth in this study make sense of the concept of home. Where do they consider home? How do their ties to the home country influence their civic belonging? How do they construct the boundaries of home? In this chapter I explore these questions by considering how social relationships with family shape the way home is understood by my participants. These family relationships include ties to people and places in the home country as well as the U.S. Finally, I consider how their social relationships with family spanning nation-state borders influence how they develop social trust and civic belonging.

In the lives of my participants, migration could both disrupt pre-existing family arrangements, and create new ones, by bringing family together in physical proximity. Most of my participants were part of a chain of immigrants, with a mother or father coming to the U.S. first, and other family members following (Orellana, Thorne, Chee & Lam, 2001). The space of time in which this occurred varied. For some of the youth in this study, migration to the U.S. meant re-uniting with a parent or other family members. For others, it led to the separation of family. Circular migration also characterized some of the youths’ movements, such as when a child was sent back to the home country for a period of time.

In each case, migration required the re-negotiation of pre-existing family relationships in a new space, or the formation of new relationships. Although the family home is often taken to be a natural construction that automatically confers belonging and feeling at home, this was not always the case for the youth in this study. Building relationships with family members required deliberate work to create social trust. Models of nation-state citizenship and national belonging often rest upon a presumption of the family home as the incubator of a sense of civic duty and obligation to the national community. Loyalty to the family is considered to be the most ‘natural’ form of emotional attachment, which can be extended to other communities of belonging, such as the nation or the globe, as children grow and mature. However, these conceptions of the home as an initial source of belonging and affinity rest on the spatial assumption that all family members are located in one place. The separation of family through migration illustrates how affinity to home is not merely received, but rather produced in the context of globalization (Mitchell & Parker, 2008). New family configurations occurring as a result of migration didn’t automatically foster emotional attachment and belonging, or lead to a feeling of being “at home,” but rather involved active processes of trust and relationship building.

The experience of joining a parent in the U.S. led some youth to identify more strongly with New York, particularly if the family member was a naturalized citizen, or had lived in the U.S. for a long period of time. However, creating social trust with family was also complicated by the fact that living with a mother or father for the first time could raise tensions, particularly at a time when, as adolescents, the youth were exploring who they were and where they belonged in the world. Although participants often expressed joy at being reunited with a mother or father, leaving other family members behind in the native country could lead to feelings of divided loyalty or being at home in two places simultaneously. Transnational social ties to family also

exemplify how the home could extend beyond the family residence and connect the youths to people and relationships across national boundaries. Hence, the variety of social arrangements represented in this study challenge the naturalized construction of family relations in the home.

Beyond building trust with family members, the home also played an important role in the development of civic belonging in the public sphere. One of the ways that families can influence the development of social trust in adolescents is by emphasizing either compassion and responsiveness to the needs of others, or vigilance against others who may take undue advantage (Flanagan, 2013). Flanagan (2013) and colleagues found that in most families, parents emphasize some combination of compassion and/or vigilance. This is beneficial for democracy, because knowing when to trust others, and when to be more guarded, is necessary for the development of a “mature sense of social trust,” or what Flanagan refers to as “social intelligence” (p. 164). Mature social trust is being able to distinguish between people who are trustworthy, and people who are not, rather than a naïve belief in the good of everyone.

Family relationships may play an even more pivotal role in the development of social trust among immigrant youth. The social disruption and upheaval caused by migration, as well as the context of reception in the host society, present challenges and opportunities for the development of social trust. The immigrant youth in this study were exposed to a greater diversity of social contexts and worldviews, which may both boost, as well as temper, their social trust. Flanagan posits that, “from a civic standpoint, the diversity of settings and people to which youth are exposed may... result in more open-mindedness.” As discussed in previous chapters, the youth in this study took a keen interest in learning about others through their exposure to different cultures and languages at school, or in public spaces like parks and museums. However, this open-mindedness towards difference was also tempered by the

influence of parents, who cautioned their children against becoming too “American.” This may be a parenting strategy for protecting children against the realities of racism in the U.S. The youth from African countries, and Yemen, reported that parents were afraid of children losing their way due to negative peer influences, and made them account for their whereabouts. In this respect, parents could reinforce the separation between home and the public sphere, making home a more bounded space, by encouraging their children to be more circumspect towards others. In doing so, parents sometimes made it more difficult for the youths to build bridges across linguistic or ethnic difference to people and places outside the home.

Re-negotiating family relationships

Reuniting with family members had a significant influence on how the youth in this study constructed civic belonging, both in the ways they developed social trust, and their understanding of “home” here in New York and the country of origin. Many of my participants had to redefine their relationships with family members as a result of migration. These family members included parents they joined in the United States, as well as those left behind in the home country. The varied social arrangements in the home caused by migration highlighted the different roles that family relationships could play in mediating social trust and civic belonging.

Reunification with family in the U.S. figured prominently in the migration stories of several of the participants. Yasser and Ayesha, who were siblings, grew up in Yemen with their mother and extended family. Their father, who had lived in New York for over thirty years, occasionally visited Yemen, but Yasser and Ayesha did not feel that they knew their father during that time. Yasser described how it felt to see his father during one of his visits to Yemen: “So he was like taking me to hug me, I was like oh, who is this, there's a man, who want to take me!” (interview, October 15, 2015). However, after moving to the Bronx, Yasser said, “I start to

know him a lot, now I feel like I've got a father, I have a complete family, two brothers, one sister, and two [parents]" (interview, October 15, 2015). Ayesha described her relationship in a similar way: When "I was younger I don't know who my father is. Like I don't know him when I was in Yemen. I know him when I'm 16" (interview, November 2, 2015).

Meeting a mother or father for the first time, or re-establishing previous ties, required active work on the part of immigrant youth and their parents to forge relationships of social trust. Whereas it is often taken for granted that youth will share close emotional ties with their biological parents, this was not a given for several of my participants. Instead, they had to first learn to trust one another. These trusting relationships between youth and their parents were nurtured through reciprocal relations of care. One of the ways Yasser's father showed him that he cared was by taking on the role of a teacher and giving him additional homework. Since his father was often not at home when Yasser returned from school, he would leave him homework problems to complete on his own. Yasser explained it this way:

So, every day, like when I go home, I have to see a paper [from] him on the table. So, I have to do it and on the second morning if I don't see him I have to leave it on the same table. So, when he gets home, he has to check it. If it's something very important, I have to meet with him, he have to wait for me, and solve the problems (interview, October 15, 2015).

The routine Yasser and his father established was a way they developed social trust. The arrangement demonstrates how Yasser and his father were accountable to each other; Yasser made sure to complete any work his father left him, and his father made sure to check it, and if necessary go over the problems with Yasser the next day. By completing this additional work, Yasser demonstrated to his father that he was trustworthy, and his father showed Yasser that he

cared about his success in school. Through this arrangement, Yasser and his father developed a reciprocal relationship.

Yasser was held to account by his father in other ways as well. In addition to monitoring his schoolwork, his father carefully scrutinized his activities outside of school. Yasser explained how his father kept track of his daily movements this way:

Every day I have to call him when I go home, when I get to work, when I get to school have to call him. He has to know where I am everywhere. Anything I want to do I have to tell him before anything, when I want to go hang out with friends, I have to tell him who is my friends, he has to see them (interview, October 15, 2015).

Whereas some adolescents might resent having to report their daily activities to their parents in these ways, Yasser considered this to be how his father cared for him and kept him safe. In reference to updating his father on his comings and goings, Yasser said, “this is how he take[s] care of me. This way I don’t get lost. Like Puerto Rican people, African Americans, these teenagers outside” (interview, October 15, 2015). The fear of “getting lost,” such as by becoming involved in illegal activities, or not doing well in school, was a frequent concern for parents and youth alike. The Puerto Ricans and African-Americans Yasser referred to were people he encountered in the Harlem neighborhood where his family’s grocery was located. According to Yasser, it was not the fault of these other kids that they got into trouble with drugs or smoked cigarettes: “You know whose fault [it is]? Their parents, they’re supposed to be teaching them” (interview, October 15, 2015). Yasser appreciated his father’s reinforcement of the cultural values of hard work and discipline as a form of caring so that he would not end up “lost” as the other kids had done. Yasser’s advice to others coming to the U.S. to “go back to your culture” shows how cultural ties functioned as an important source of his belonging (interview, October

15, 2015). In this context, forgetting his cultural roots could lead Yasser to go astray, get lost, and not know where he belongs. Yasser's father played an important role in promoting his civic belonging through the maintenance of cultural ties. Moreover, by calling his father to let him know where he is, Yasser was able to demonstrate to his father that he could be counted on. Although the constant monitoring of his daily activities could be regarded as a lack of trust, Yasser experienced it as a form of caring in the context of their renegotiated relationship.

In and through developing a trusting relationship with his father, Yasser also created civic belonging to the U.S. by taking advantage of his father's well-established civic ties. One of the ways Yasser made use of his relationship to his father to create civic belonging was by working at the family grocery. Yasser referred to the economic activity the store generated, and the taxes his father paid, as the fulfillment of civic duties that gave he and his family the right to belong in New York. In referring to his father, Yasser said, "I'm proud of him, he's a worker, he works hard and he do all the stuff, he know[s] English, he has the citizen[ship], all this" (interview, October 15, 2015). According to Yasser, working hard, being able to speak English, and becoming a naturalized citizen all entitled his father to civic belonging. Through his relationship



Figure 20: Photo of family grocery

with his father, and by modeling himself after his him, Yasser sought to create civic belonging for himself here in the U.S.

Yasser provided additional evidence of his civic ties to the U.S. by photographing the family grocery (Figure 20). The photo shows shelves of grocery items neatly displayed. Organizing the shelves was one of his responsibilities at the store. The photo is a testament to the many hours he spent at the store helping his father, and reflects the image Yasser had of himself as a trustworthy person. When explaining why he chose to take several photographs of the grocery, Yasser said “I mean that’s the place where I stay always... That’s the place where I spend all my time” (photo-elicitation, November 24, 2015). Yasser was expected to work at the grocery on most days. We had to reschedule an interview on several occasions because he unexpectedly had to work that day. From these instances, it was clear that he felt obligated to be at the grocery. Even on his days off, something compelled Yasser to go there. In explaining why, Yasser said, “I have to. Like the store... for me it’s like oxygen, when I breathe over there” (interview, October 15, 2015). The intensity of his social and emotional connection to the store was so strong that he felt his own survival depended on it. As he further explained, “Sometimes I go and they really need me. I saw them busy and the delivery come in” (interview, October 15, 2015). Yasser’s emotional connection to the store, his feeling of responsibility, and being needed by his co-workers and father, contributed to his self-definition as a dependable person.

Kadija was another participant who re-negotiated a relationship with a parent as a result of migration. Like Yasser, Kadija had to work to cultivate a trusting relationship with her mother based on mutual care. When drawing her relational map, Kadija drew her grandfather closest to herself because he raised her in Senegal for much of her childhood while her mother lived in the U.S. Kadija’s mother moved to the U.S. when she was three-years-old, and so she had few

memories of her. The primary reason Kadija came to New York was to get to know her mother better, but forging a mother-daughter bond was more difficult than she had expected. As she explained:

I used to call my aunties mom, and now when I say mommy it's like foreign for me.

Before I would say, if I see my mom, we're going to have this mother daughter thing. But it's not like that. Because we are kind of different, like me and her we do some stuff differently. Because my mom she's this loving person, she's always hugging you or whatever. And I'm just like, oh my God, and she's like you don't even tell me you love me. And I'm like, can't you just stop? So, I'm not really used to her (interview, November 2, 2015).

Kadija's comments illustrate the complex nature in which reuniting with a parent required the re-negotiation of family ties. Kadija's use of the word "foreign" to describe what it felt like to call her biological mother "mommy" shows how she didn't initially feel 'at home' in their relationship. Taking into consideration the feelings Kadija expressed at the start of this chapter, about not knowing where home is, and the close connection she felt to her grandfather, we see how Kadija had to invest emotional labor in order to develop a trusting relationship with her mother, while continuing to maintain close ties to the family she left behind in Senegal.

This was a difficult task, because contrary to her own expectations, Kadija and her mother didn't share a "mother daughter" thing. They had to come to a mutual understanding about how to show one another they cared. While Kadija's mother was "this loving person," who expressed her affection physically and verbally, Kadija was not always able to reciprocate in the same ways. She needed time to get "used to her," by building a trusting and familiar relationship after the years of living apart. Both Yasser and Kadija show how creating reciprocal relations of

care with family required active work and negotiation. They needed to learn to trust their parents, and their parents to trust them, in order to forge an emotional bond. The importance of feeling “at home” in these family relationships shows how civic belonging depends on an emotional attachment to people and places.

Whereas migration brought some family members closer together physically, it also caused ruptures in previously stable family arrangements, which impacted how the youths developed social trust. For most of my participants, moving to the U.S. included saying goodbye to family and friends with whom they had trusting relationships in the home country. For some, family members migrated to the U.S. together, but after they arrived the family separated. The separation of family through migration de-stabilized more fixed notions of home in cases where family that had been in the same geographic location became distant. For instance, Nicole and her mother moved to the U.S. first, with plans for her father to follow shortly thereafter. However, it was several years before her mother had saved enough money to send for her father. Nicole anticipated his arrival: “I was really excited about my dad coming here because my family was really united and everything... And then when he comes, they’re not together” (interview, November 14, 2015).

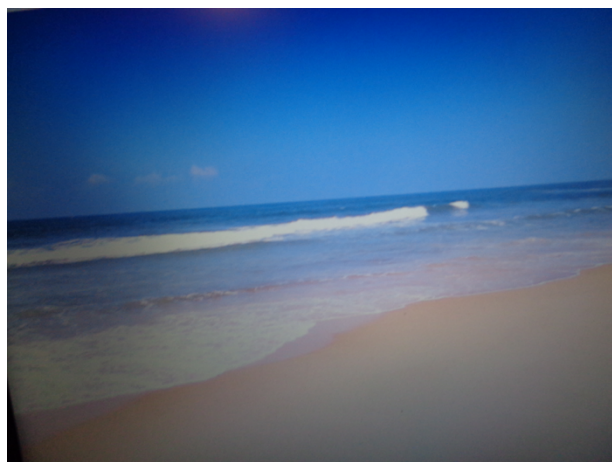


Figure 21: Photo of a beach in the D.R.

Nicole sometimes longed to return to the Dominican Republic, to a time and place when her family was physically and emotionally closest. One of Nicole's images of home was of a beach, taken from the Internet (Figure 21). She found the image by googling the name of a beach that she and her family used to visit often. It shows an ocean with gently rolling waves, conveying the serenity Nicole says she felt there. All that is visible is the ocean and sand, without people or any other distractions. About the beach Nicole said, "I really enjoy living in an environment where there is water around. And I can feel relaxed. I really like the sound of the waves ... the smell and everything" (photo-elicitation, January 7, 2016). The sights and sounds of the beach brought Nicole a feeling of comfort and familiarity that was lacking in the Bronx. The significance of the beach as a place where she felt relaxed and where she belonged was also tied to it being a place where her family came together. As Nicole explained, "my grandmother lived really close [to the beach]. And we used to go really often to her house, so my family was really close before. And we used to make trips every weekend" (photo-elicitation, January 7, 2016). The photo she took of the beach therefore served as a reminder to Nicole of her close relationship with her grandmother and strong family ties.

Although she and her grandmother still speak, Nicole said, "we don't talk more now because of, since my dad and mom are not together and there's a bunch of stuff going on" (photo-elicitation, January 7, 2016). Nicole's photo can be interpreted as a representation of home as firmly rooted in a place where she and her family were still close. Her allusion to the strain her parent's separation has placed on her relationship with her grandmother may also speak to her feelings of divided loyalty and the struggle to belong in two places simultaneously. The physical and emotional upheaval caused by migration and her family's separation may have had a de-stabilizing effect on her social trust as well.

Nicole was not the only participant who sought to sustain ties to family members left behind in the home country. Through their transnational ties my participants worked to maintain the social trust their family had placed in them to make the most of the opportunities they had been given in the U.S. Living up to these expectations was an important means of giving back to the community that helped to raise them. Kadija's advice to other transnational youth was to "always remember what is behind you, so you can reach what is in front of you." The importance Kadija placed on "looking back" is characteristic of the African concept of Sankofa, which, translated into English, also means "to look or reach back." Knight and Watson (2014) introduce the concept of "participatory communal citizenship" to explain the significant role family plays in the civic actions taken by African immigrant youth. Kadija demonstrates a kind of participatory communal citizenship by working hard in school to repay the sacrifices of her mother and grandfather:

Like taking the example of school, school can be really annoying because [of] waking up early and whatever... I'm just saying that you know my mom worked really hard for me to be here... And my grandpa, since I was little he was taking care of me, so I don't want to deceive him... Like when people have faith in me, I always like to make them happy (interview, November 2, 2015).

The sense of obligation these participants felt towards parents and grandparents still living in the home country also has significance for the development of social trust. Family relationships that cross national boundaries played a role not only in learning to trust others, but also learning to become trustworthy people. Through their relationships, my participants learned about the importance of making commitments and honoring the promises they made to family. Kadija wants to live up to the image her grandpa has of her as a trustworthy person, and prove that she

is deserving of the faith he placed in her to succeed in school. Failure to honor her commitment to family who sacrificed for her would violate the image she had of herself as a trustworthy person. Kadija gave further explanation for why this matters to her when she said, “Like when people have faith in me, I always like to make them happy. Because I don't like it when people do that to me, so I don't like to do that to them” (interview, November 2, 2015). Kadija articulates a further reason why she doesn't want to let people down who have put their faith in her: she doesn't like it when people let her down, and therefore she doesn't want to disappoint the people in her life she cares about. Kadija recognizes the importance of reciprocity to creating dependable relationships of trust. An important aspect of how these youths enacted civic belonging was the creation and maintenance of social trust through the honoring of sacrifices of family to give them greater life opportunities.

Home Country Imaginaries

Parents also influenced youths' civic belonging by strengthening their ties to the home country and admonishing their children for identifying too strongly with the U.S. or mainstream American culture. The parents from Guinea, Senegal and the Gambia sometimes threatened to send youth back to the home country for a period of time. For instance, Amadou shared a story with me about a cousin who went missing one night, causing his mom a great deal of emotional distress. Eventually the cousin was picked up by the police and brought home. According Amadou, “if his dad know that he does that, they're definitely going to send him to Africa” (photo-elicitation, December 8, 2015). Threatening to send children to the home country could be motivated by a number of factors. My participants reported that it was used as a disciplinary strategy by parents when children did not show the proper discipline or respect for elders. Coe and Shani (2015) found that Ghanaian parents valued the experience of hardship, such as a

harsher school environment, and viewed circular migration as a way to pass on the value of hard work to their children as a form of cultural capital that was lacking in the U.S. Moreover, parents sought to reinforce “intergenerational reciprocities.” Threats of sending children to the native country may have functioned to reinforce their sense of obligation to others and participatory communal citizenship. In this respect parents mediated youths’ feelings of obligation to previous generations, as mentioned by Kadija in the previous section, by reinforcing an identification with the home country. Time spent in the home country could also have been a means to teach children to be resilient in the face of racism in the U.S. (Bledsoe & Sow, 2011).

The case of Sembene, who was sent to live with his grandmother in Senegal between the ages of eight and fifteen, is evidence of the mediating effect parents could have on participants’ ties to home. According to Sembene, his parents “tricked him” by telling him he would only be visiting for a couple of weeks. However, in looking back on his experience, Sembene demonstrated a self-reflection and awareness of the hardships his kin in Senegal faced, which gave him a greater ability to overcome adversity, and motivated him to work hard in school. According to Sembene, living in Senegal “was a great experience. And you know I’ve seen stuff that are really, you know, that’s the main reason why I’m working hard [in school], because life is not easy for everyone” (group interview, October 15, 2015). Previous studies indicate that circular migration may function to “reduce the costs of social reproduction, promote learning of the mother tongue and culture and remove children from what is perceived as the negative and undisciplined social environment of the United States (Levitt, 2009a). In addition to becoming more appreciative of the opportunities available to him in the U.S., the experience of living in Senegal shaped his ties to his parents’ home country, which led to a feeling of civic belonging in

both places. Sembene felt like he could be at home in and identify with both the U.S., where he was born, and Senegal where he had lived with his grandparents.

However, Sembene was challenged to maintain both sources of his civic belonging simultaneously. Despite having lived in Senegal for those seven years, he sometimes had his African identity questioned since he was born in America. When applying for a municipal ID, Sembene indicated on his application that he was African. However, upon seeing his birth certificate, the person receiving the application asked him why he didn't identify himself as American. Here is how Sembene described the conversation:

They were like, I thought you said you were from Africa, and then I say, yes, I am from Africa. But they say why your certificate is from, you know, New York. And then I say I was born here, but my parents came from Africa so I count myself as African (interview, October 22, 2015).

This exchange between Sembene and the person issuing municipal IDs illustrates the difficulty youth like Sembene could face in feeling at home in the U.S. and America at the same time. Rather than choosing to identify exclusively as “American,” “African” or “Senegalese,” Sembene sought to straddle the boundaries of civic belonging by constructing a concept of home that was inclusive of his multiple ties. He traced his civic belonging to his African ancestry and intergenerational ties to the place of Africa, as well as his birthplace. However, in this encounter, and at other times such as when filling out job applications, Sembene was confronted with having to choose which place was home, leading to feelings of divided loyalty.

It is important to recognize that the concept of home, and the ability or desire to maintain ties to home, were shaped in significant ways by the home country context. The option of returning to the home country was not a viable option for some youth, such as my Yemeni

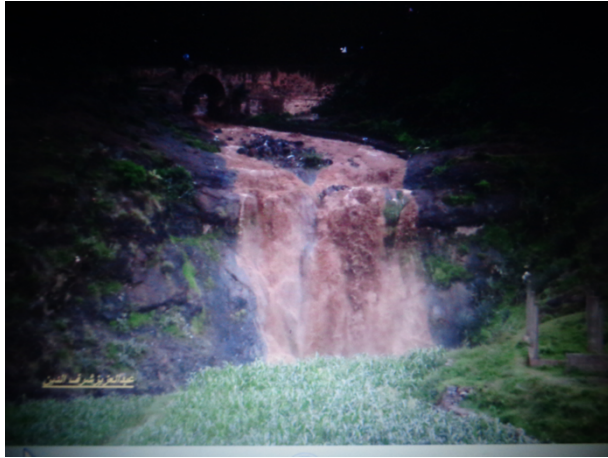


Figure 22: Photo of waterfall

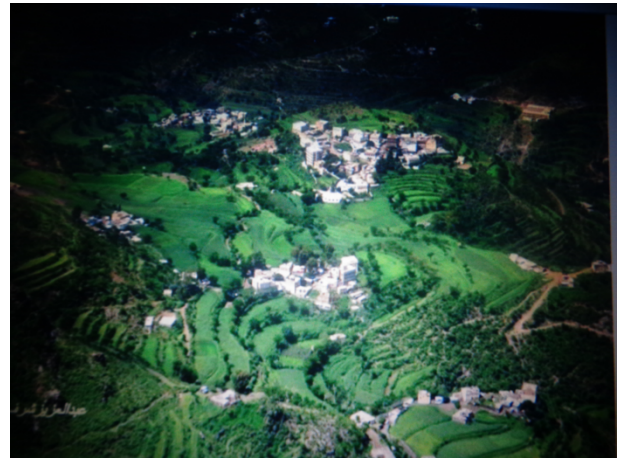


Figure 23: Photo of village in Yemen

participants. As Kadija's quote at the beginning of this chapter demonstrates, for some participants, home may have been a place they couldn't or didn't want to return to because it wasn't safe anymore. Yasser and Sophia, for instance were unable to visit Yemen due to political instability and war. The social trust that Yasser developed with his father through working in the family grocery here in the U.S. overshadowed any mention of social obligations to family members in Yemen. Although Yasser and Sophia still have family members living in Yemen who they support in various ways, they are acutely aware of the violent conditions in their home country that limit their ability to be more involved.

Although the prompt I gave the participants was to take photos to show someone from their home country places in New York, all of Yasser's photos were of Yemen, except the two he took of the grocery store. He had asked his friend still living there to send him digital photos they had taken during trips to different parts of the country. All the photos either showed natural scenes, including a waterfall (Figure 22), or his village (Figure 23). The photos portray an unspoiled pastoral landscape, showing a terraced hillside and a bird's eye view of the community where Yasser lived. The scenes were so idyllic that I initially mistook them to be images taken from a calendar or poster.

In describing the photos, Yasser said,

You know how everything looks nice and beautiful. That's the spot where I used to sit a lot. So now if you go you're only going to see people carrying guns. And other stuff. And fight, war. And all of these good things are gone. These pictures are old. He took them last year before the war started.

The decision to take photos of Yemen exemplified Yasser's attempt to remember a past and a home that, for him, no longer existed, or to which he couldn't return. As he explains, if he were to go back to the site of his photos today things would be different. Taking these photos was a means of holding on to an idealized past, or an idea of his home country that was unchanged from how he wanted to remember it. In addition, it may have been a means for Yasser to keep the images of Yemen he wanted to remember fresh in his mind. During our interviews, Yasser spoke separately about the difficulty he had remembering people from Yemen. As he explained:

I forget like most Yemen, I forget the village, I forget who are my friends, I forget the names. You know by working over here, working in school, new friends new everything. Mind is not going to fit all of these things (interview, October 15, 2015).

According to Yasser, the difficulty he has remembering the names of his friends in Yemen is due to his inability to "fit" all that information in his mind. As he made friends in his new school, for example, more recent memories were replacing previous ones. The more invested he became in his new life in America, the more difficult it was for him to stay connected to people and places in Yemen. The feeling of his mind being full suggests that he has adopted an idea of home as bounded and fixed, like a container that has a finite amount of space. Yasser may have asked his friend in Yemen to send him the photos of their trips together as a way to refresh his memory of people or places he was now forgetting.

One place in New York where Yasser could go to be reminded of home was a Yemeni restaurant he sometimes went to with his Yemeni friends. According to Yasser, the clothes the servers wear, the way people address him, and the way the food is prepared, all remind him “exactly of Yemen” (interview, October 15, 2015). However, Yasser admitted that he sometimes would prefer not to remember. He explained why: “Sometimes I don't want to go there because I don't want to remember because I don't think one day I'm going to go back. I want to go, but now I hear many kids die, many people dying” (interview, October 15, 2015). Therefore, Yasser may also choose to forget Yemen as a means of coping with the fact that he can't return; holding on to certain memories would be painful. The difficulty of being able to maintain a sense of home and belonging in two places simultaneously therefore can also be traced to conditions in the home country context, which in Yasser's case, prevented him from being able to visit his family, friends and home places.

A final way in which parents mediated the youths' civic belonging by strengthening ties to the home country was by cautioning them against becoming “too American.” Just as they feared “losing” their children to a lack of discipline (Coe and Shani, 2015), parents also worried that their children might not maintain the necessary cultural values. Parents' fears were evident in their desire that their children attend college close to home. The subject of where to attend college arose in a group interview with Amadou and Assiatou. Amadou wanted to go to college in Pennsylvania, but did not think his parents would let him. Amadou and Assiatou discussed the reasons why African parents preferred their children attend college close to home:

Amadou: You know like, Africans is going to be really hard to let me go, I know it's going to affect my future, but it's going to be really hard to leave, to leave the other state to live myself there, and no friend, only friend from other country.

Assiatou: Because they may not trust you. They might think if you go you're going to change your religion, or you're going to be change your whole... Smoking, you're not going to study and all that (group interview, October 15, 2015).

In this exchange Amadou expressed ambivalence about leaving family to attend college in a place where none of his friends would be immigrants. Assiatou believed that parents may not trust their children to remember the values they had been taught, and therefore preferred that they stay close to home where they can monitor their behavior. Amadou admitted to sometimes attending parties without his father's permission. Amadou explained why:

Because if I ask him, he know that it's not good for me to go to party because in Islam, in the Koran, it says if you're Islam you're not supposed to go to party, dancing, the way that the people dress (interview, November 24, 2015).

Amadou may have understood from his experience of sometimes engaging in activities his father would disapprove of, that being at college away from the supportive network of family, would make it more difficult to stay true to his religious beliefs. In addition, his parent's lack of trust may have fueled his own ambivalence about being away from them, and caused him to question his own trustworthiness. The fear of becoming too American was also taken up and expressed by the participants. As Kadija says, "Some people came here and then they forgot all about themselves. They just want to live the American life, forget totally about their culture" (interview, November 2, 2015). For Kadija, to forget about your culture includes forgetting about the family who helped you get to where you are today. Therefore, resisting Americanization, working hard in school, and staying out of trouble was a way they could fulfill their obligations to family and keep their promises. In these ways, maintaining ties to the home country, took

different forms, including doing well in school and not becoming too American, while functioning to build the youths' social trust and image of themselves as trustworthy people.

Mediating experiences of civic exclusion

A final role that parents played in shaping their children's social trust and civic belonging was by helping them make sense of the civic exclusions they experienced. While working in his family's grocery in Harlem customers sometimes excluded Yasser in the following ways:

They were like, you're not American, what are you doing in my neighborhood, what are you doing in my country? And I was like, no I'm a citizen, I have my United States passport. What do you mean? I'm just like one of you. He was like, you freaking immigrant, and all that. Get back to your country (interview, October 22, 2015).

According to Yasser, his father helped him to deal with these civic exclusions by helping him to identify "real Americans" as people who were "professional." In the context of the social interactions taking place at the grocery, examples of acting "professional" included wearing nice clothes, saying "good morning, hi, how are you, when you buy stuff, thank you sir, you're welcome" (interview, October 22, 2015). The ways in which Yasser's father helped him make sense of his social interactions at the grocery may be consistent with how African American parents in other studies have been shown to prepare their children for the realities of racism. Parents who had themselves experienced prejudice and discrimination taught children to be less trusting of certain people as a means of self-protection (Flanagan, 2013).

According to Putnam (2000), "in virtually all societies, the *have-nots* are less trusting than *haves*, probably because *haves* are treated by others with more honesty and respect (p. 138). Hence, being less trusting can be considered a natural and necessary response to being marginalized, financially insecure, exposed to greater crime, or told to "go back to your

country.” Previous research has shown that parents play a formative role in the development of interpersonal trust, or trust not only in friends, family, and people that are like them, but also “people in general” (Flanagan, 2013). Parents exert their influence in a number of ways. Parents of immigrant youth may seek to protect their children from prejudice, racial discrimination, and other civic exclusions by modeling greater vigilance towards people outside their social networks. For example, cautioning their children against becoming too “American” and closely monitoring their physical whereabouts may be how some parents of the participants in this study sought to shield them from the negative psychological effects of everyday discrimination.

Another way parents helped shape social trust was in the degree to which they put their trust in children. Not only can parents increase their children’s social trust by emphasizing a combination of the values of compassion and vigilance towards others, they can also do so by demonstrating trust in their children. Existing research has shown that young people who reported feeling like their parents listen to their opinions and respect their views, even when their parents disagreed with them, were more trusting of others (Flanagan, 2013). This points to the reciprocal relationship between trust and trustworthiness. Youth who view themselves as trustworthy and deserving of trust, are more likely to put their faith in others. As discussed above, sometimes parents showed a lack of trust in children by closely monitoring who their friends were, or how they spent their free time. During a focus group interview, several participants discussed the fact that not just parents, but adults in general, don’t listen to teenagers. They believed that adults didn’t always respect their opinions because they thought youth lacked life experience:

Kadija: They're like, teenagers only complain. Even if you say something, they take it as complaints, so that's why we're not really listened to.

Nicole: Or they say you're just a teenager, you don't know anything about life.

Kadija: Some teenagers went through more than any adults could ever, they have a life experience that teach them more than some adults.

Nicole: You're not an adult but you're also not a kid. So, you're in between learning new things, and everything is really hard. (group interview, December, 15, 2015)

Nicole highlighted the difficulty of the life stage in between childhood and adulthood, which included the questioning of previously secure convictions, or “learning new things.” One of the reasons why adolescence is a critical period in the development of social trust is because it marks a time when youth are beginning to distinguish between trust in family members and people they know personally, and trusting people in general, or interpersonal trust. A more diffuse, generalized trust in one’s fellow citizens is critical to democracy. Kadija and Nicole also speak to the difficulty of separating from family and beginning to form independent opinions, while not feeling like adults respect those opinions, including parents. Seeking out adults, whether they be teachers or other adult mentors, with whom they shared a caring relationship, may be one way the participants sought respect for their opinions. Feeling like the adults in their lives trusted them, and seeing themselves as trustworthy people, played an important role in developing interpersonal trust, including in one’s fellow citizens.

Chapter conclusions

How the immigrant youth in this study created civic belonging was rooted in their understandings of home. Where they considered home was shaped by their social relationships with family, in particular their parents and grandparents who helped raise them. Constructing the place of home here in the U.S. was a project that required emotional labor and investment to create trusting relationships with parents with whom they were reunited. These relationships

were reciprocal between parents and children. Ties to family also transcended the immediate home residence in the U.S., and included family members in the home country. Transnational social ties also served an important role in creating social trust. Migrating to the U.S. was made possible by the sacrifices of family, which left my participants feeling obligated to make the most of the opportunities they were given. An image of themselves as trustworthy people depended on fulfilling social responsibilities to family in the U.S. and the home country.

Parents also played an important role in mediating participants' civic belonging by influencing their connections to the home country. This could include physically sending their children to the home country to impart belonging there, or by admonishing them to retain cultural values and practices. These transnational ties could contribute to more flexible forms of civic belonging that included people and places in the U.S. and the native country. Finally, parents helped mediate youths' sense-making of civic exclusion here in the U.S. This contributed to a more mature social trust. However, in teaching their children to be more guarded around people who were different, parents may have also tempered their generalized trust in people outside their immediate social networks.

Chapter 7 – Discussion and Implications

In her book, *Talking to Strangers*, Danielle Allen (2004) draws her readers' attention to an iconic 1957 photograph of Elizabeth Eckford as she is being turned away from entering Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, by a group of angry white protestors (Figure 24). According to Allen, the violent reaction to school desegregation in the southern United States following the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision was a pivotal moment in redefining how Americans related to one another as citizens. The photograph "rendered visible democracy's public sphere," laying bare longstanding deep racial divisions in U.S. society for all to see (p. 5). It exposed as illusory the idea of a single civic culture into which all Americans can or should assimilate in order to belong as "one people."

The photographs taken by the immigrant youth in this study can be interpreted in similar ways as their attempts to render visible what it meant to them to belong in U.S. society today. In this dissertation, I explore their photographs and what my participants have to say about them as performances of civic belonging in places within and across nation-state borders. The questions guiding this investigation included how immigrant youth develop a sense of civic belonging both within and across national boundaries. The concept of civic belonging was used to explain how



Figure 24: Photo of Elizabeth Eckford by Will Counts

immigrant youths enact citizenship as a set of everyday social practices. I focused especially on the building of social trust in order to bridge social divisions in society in order to see themselves as connected to other people in the community, with whom they shared a common interest. I have attempted to show how places, including school, neighborhood and the home, shape, and are shaped by, this sense of civic belonging. Finally, I explored how their identities, allegiances and emotional attachments were influenced by their ability to create civic belonging.

Fundamental to the task of creating civic belonging is being able to imagine oneself as part of “the people” who make up the democratic polity. Anderson (1983) showed how the social imagination is integral to the formation of the nation-state, “because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion (p. 25). Allen uses the metaphors of “oneness” and “wholeness” to contrast two very different ways citizens in a democratic society can imagine themselves as part of “the people.” Citizenship norms based on the metaphor of “wholeness” would “focus on integration, not assimilation, and on the mutual exchange and appropriations that have already occurred among different groups and that will always keep occurring” (p. 20). Achieving the goal of making the American people “whole” requires new citizenship practices to deal with the social divisions in society. Nevertheless, the metaphor of “oneness” continues to undergird an assimilationist model of citizenship education in most U.S. schools (Banks, 2008). This model of civic education requires immigrant youths to sever ties to their native lands, such as by devaluing their bilingual and bicultural identities in order to become American.

Being able to imagine oneself a part of the democratic whole is further affected by the “political projects” of the nation-state (Yuval-Davis, 2006). These projects are “all about

potentially meeting other people and deciding whether they stand inside or outside the imaginary boundary line of the nation and or other communities of belonging, whether they are ‘us’ or ‘them’” (p. 204). These encounters take place in the public spheres of school and the neighborhood, and yet, people living within the geographic boundaries of the nation are differently situated to be able to imagine themselves a part of the democratic community. Public spaces are inherently unequal. The 1957 photograph of Elizabeth Eckford made plain the use of public space by Southern whites as a means to exclude black citizens. Constructing places of civic belonging in their schools, neighborhoods and homes required my participants to re-negotiate various boundaries in order to build social trust that bridged linguistic, ethnic and racial lines of difference in the midst of unequal power relationships.

Having separately discussed each of the social contexts in which immigrant youth created civic belonging – school, neighborhood and home – in this final chapter I identify common patterns in how my participants established what it means to belong to the U.S. in the context of their transnational lives. I then discuss the implications of this dissertation study for the work of teachers, schools, and future research.

Constructing civic belonging through social trust

A consistent pattern in how my participants created civic belonging was their need to develop social trust. Opportunities to practice civic norms of reciprocity and the willingness to sacrifice for the good of others differed across the social contexts of school, neighborhood and home. In order to create social trust, it is necessary to accept some degree of vulnerability in our relationships with others. Even the most loyal of friends will sometimes disappoint us because human beings are unpredictable and have the freedom to act in ways that benefit themselves. Therefore, social trust is based on the belief that despite our vulnerability, our fellow citizens

will not take advantage of us. As Allen states, “trust consists primarily of believing that others will not exploit one’s vulnerabilities, and that one’s agency is generally secure, even if one cedes some elements of it to others” (p.132). In school, my participants were able to cross boundaries of linguistic difference because they were secure in the fact that their school was a caring environment where one’s vulnerabilities would not be exploited.

Moreover, the conditions that will lead to the richest social trust are those in which people experience mutual vulnerability, an extreme example of which are soldiers fighting in a war, whose lives are at stake (Allen, 2004, p. 174). Between school and neighborhood, school more closely approximated these ideal conditions for social trust production. Their school was a place designed for immigrants such as themselves, all of whom were learning English and were new to the U.S. In this respect students were mutually vulnerable. However, there were also aspects of the school that were not equitable, such as the fact that a majority of students spoke Spanish as a first language. Students who didn’t speak Spanish were in a position of greater vulnerability and experienced feelings of insecurity. This sometimes led to distrust, thus making it more difficult for students to bridge their linguistic differences.

Theories of straight-line immigrant assimilation (Alba & Nee, 2003) do not adequately explain how the participants in this study sought to create civic belonging because they assume that immigrant youth face a mainstream culture into which they must choose to either integrate or from which they must remain apart. According to this scenario, the only option available to immigrants is to create social trust by erasing their differences and becoming part of the mainstream culture. They could overcome their vulnerability and insecurity by blending in, learning English, and adopting American cultural norms. Whether previous generations of immigrants in fact fully assimilated in these ways continues to be debated among historians of

immigration (Olneck, 2003, Morawska, 2001; Tyack, 2001), and is beyond the scope of this study. However, this dissertation study does present strong evidence that at least this is not how my participants viewed their relationship to American cultural beliefs and practices.

Segmented assimilation theory contends that more than one path of assimilation into the host society is indeed possible: (1) assimilating into the mainstream culture and achieving upward social mobility, (2) assimilating into the underclass and experiencing social decline; or (3) preserving ethnic and cultural ties mainly through membership in ethnic enclaves. However, this theory does not sufficiently account for the “super-diversity” (Vertovec, 2007) of the school setting in this study either, where Spanish was spoken by the majority of students. In this social and linguistic environment, students from Guinea, Senegal and the Gambia chose to learn Spanish as a means to cross linguistic boundaries, engage in greater perspective-taking, and build social trust. However, at other times these same students expressed frustration that English was not used more as a means to communicate across linguistic difference. Their preference for English, therefore should not be interpreted singly as a desire to assimilate into American culture and become upwardly mobile, but rather as the means to cross linguistic borders and create civic belonging. Likewise, while the Spanish-dominant environment may have been more culturally familiar to Spanish-speaking students, they also made an effort to use English as a means of creating civic belonging. As members of the Spanish-speaking majority, my Dominican participants spoke English to create an inclusive space in school. Their use of English in school, therefore, was not simply a means of assimilating into mainstream U.S. culture either, but rather a decision to sacrifice some of their own comfort by speaking in a language that would include their non-Spanish-speaking peers. The use of English in the unique social context of these

schools challenge previous theories of immigrant assimilation to account for the complex multilingual practices of students in super-diverse settings as a means to create civic belonging.

Constructing civic belonging by negotiating boundaries

Another way the youth constructed civic belonging across the different social contexts was by negotiating boundaries to create different spaces of belonging. In school, the youth could adopt more flexible approaches to belonging than they could in their neighborhood communities. Bridging linguistic differences, for example, could be accomplished more easily in the school context where students cultivated relationships with teachers and other students that crossed linguistic, ethnic and religious divisions. In order to develop these trusting relationships, the youths formed ties with people who were both like them, as well as those who were different. In doing so, they made flexible use of boundaries to create communities of belonging. The youths from Senegal, the Gambia and Guinea, for instance, referred to themselves as African in the space of their school in order to create social ties and regional identities. This required them to enlarge the boundaries of trust to include people with whom they shared a common African ancestry. In the wake of the 2015 terror attacks in Paris, France, the youth extended the boundaries of belonging further to include other members of the African diaspora. On the other hand, in the context of their neighborhood communities, the Muslim youth sometimes drew the boundaries of belonging closer in, to include only those people from their ethnic group. This was evident in the choice of what masjid to attend; Bakary chose to attend a masjid with other Gambians, while at Assiatou's masjid, services were conducted in Fulani.

A significant way that my participants negotiated boundaries to feel a sense of civic belonging was by creating “bridging” social capital, or “norms, networks, and trust [that] link substantial sectors of the community and span underlying social cleavages” (Putnam, 1995, 665).

Bridging social capital leads to enhanced cooperation between different members of society and is likely to serve broader interests. However, according to Putnam, bridging ethnic, linguistic and racial differences to create social capital is more difficult in diverse places. In a study of social capital in cities across the U.S., he found an increase in ethnic diversity to be correlated with a reduction in social trust. A possible explanation for this finding, sometimes referred to as “conflict theory,” is that “the more we are brought into physical proximity with people of another race or ethnic background, the more we stick to ‘our own’ and the less we trust the ‘other’” (Putnam, 2007, p. 142). As a result, in diverse settings people may be more likely to “hunker down” than engage in informal sociability. However, I did not find evidence of my participants being any less trusting of other people in their diverse school context. On the contrary, they made a concerted effort to highlight their boundary crossing activities and represent their school as diverse *and* like a family where people could be trusted not to discriminate.

The evidence from this study lends greater support to the ‘contact hypothesis,’ which predicts that the more contact we have with people who are unlike us, the greater our ability to see the world from different perspectives, and the more trusting of others despite our differences. This is precisely what occurred through the school’s instructional groupings, where students adopted multilingual practices to communicate across difference and complete assignments. Additional research has teased out the relationship between diversity and social trust, and found that the amount and type of social interaction mediates the negative effects of diversity on social trust (Letki, 2008; Stolle, Soroka & Johnston, 2008; Sturgis, Brunton-Smith, Read & Allum, 2010). In other words, living in a diverse neighborhood, or attending a diverse school, creates social distrust only in the absence of social interaction. This dissertation study demonstrates how immigrant youth capitalized on opportunities to build social trust and learn about other cultures

when working in collaborative groups. In their neighborhood communities, however, they experienced fewer opportunities to interact socially due to a perceived lack of care and safety, which negatively affected their ability to cross linguistic, ethnic and racial barriers.

Political projects of civic belonging

Unaccounted for in the various theories of social capital are the ways in which creating social trust is affected by the political projects of nation-states that construct belonging at different levels (Yuval-Davis, 2006). One level at which belonging is constructed is that of identifications and emotional attachments. Yuval-Davis argues that “as a rule, the emotional components of people’s constructions of themselves and their identities become more central the more threatened and less secure they feel.” An example of a political project directed at the level of identifications and emotional attachments is the construction of belonging in America following the events of September 11, 2001. In most schools, the preparation of youth for citizenship is based on the assumption of fixed scales of belonging and civic education is aimed at the production of citizens whose loyalty will be to the nation-state. However, a group of native-born high school students in one study who were shown a photograph of three firefighters raising an American flag at ground zero expressed a mixture of emotions, including patriotic allegiance to America, as well as resentment at the use of nationalist sentiment to serve political purposes, such as American military involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq. In response to a political project that sought legitimacy for going to war, instead of feeling a greater allegiance to America, these youths expressed an historicized and contingent affinity to different scales of belonging, including the globe, nation-state, and their city.

The politics of belonging also played a role in how my immigrant participants constructed civic belonging in the context of more recent efforts to restrict belonging using

criteria that label Muslim youth as threats to national security. They demonstrated a far-reaching capacity for creating civic belonging at different scales, including diasporic, national, and regional identifications. For instance, the form and direction of their attachments was prompted by the more recent terror attacks in Paris, France, an area of the world to which they felt connected as members of the African diaspora. Following the attacks, my participants expressed a deep concern for Muslims in France and New York, including a desire to visit France and even to see the nightclub where the attacks took place. Another example of the importance of emotional attachment to creating civic belonging was their identification with Barack Obama as America's first black president. In a different study of a young Ghanaian transnational, Kwame, the election of Barack Obama as the first American black president activated his identity as a global citizen (Knight, 2007). Tapping into worldwide excitement over the U.S. presidential election, Kwame viewed his vote in the election as an act of global civic engagement that connected him to people around the world, who also viewed Obama as a hopeful example of improved race relations.

This dissertation study extends the existing literature on the politics of belonging by illustrating the relational aspects of civic belonging. My participants did not view the public sphere as a space devoid of emotion, or detached reasoned debate, but rather a place that could produce a *sense* of belonging or exclusion. The public space of school and the neighborhood could at different times and places evoke feelings of calm, safety, and love. Alternatively, these places could feel crazy, insecure, or unfamiliar. Political projects, including the labeling of all Muslims as terrorists, or Mexican immigrants as criminal, were designed to increase suspicion of people who could be labeled different. As Sembene observed, the presidential candidates appealed directly to people's fears of the "Other" in order to blame Muslims and immigrants for

a struggling U.S. economy. In their neighborhood communities, these political projects made it more difficult for my participants to create bridging social capital and social trust that crossed social divisions in order to create a more expansive sense of ‘we’ to which they could belong.

Civic belonging as caring

In looking across the social contexts of school, neighborhood and home, another way in which participants constructed civic belonging was through the formation of caring relationships. In school my participants cultivated caring relationships with their teachers and peers. Teachers cared not only about students’ academic success, but also their emotional well-being. However, in their neighborhood communities, my participants reported an overall lack of caring that made it difficult for them to build social trust. Previous studies of successful schools for and with native-born and immigrant Latino/a youth have documented the critical role that caring relationships play in cultivating a sense of belonging that contributed to academic success (Bartlett & García, 2011; García, Woodley, Flores & Chu, 2012; Gibson, Gándara & Koyama, 2004; Valenzuela, 1999).

Angela Valenzuela’s study of schooling with Mexican American youth demonstrates how teachers’ and students’ conflicting views of what it means to “care” about education led to the “social de-capitalization” of students (Valenzuela, 1999). The view of *educación* adopted by the Mexican American youth “refers to the family’s role of inculcating in children a sense of moral, social, and personal responsibility and serves as the foundation for all other learning” (p. 23). However, students were denied the opportunity to engage in reciprocal relationships with teachers, which subtracted cultural resources necessary for their academic success. A more recent case study of another school serving primarily Dominican youth in the Washington Heights neighborhood of New York City found that an “additive” approach to schooling

contributed to their social capital (Bartlett & García, 2011; Michael, Andrade & Bartlett, 2007). Teachers, administrators, and peers at the school valued youth cultural assets, such as their bicultural and bilingual identities. Teachers cared about students and built *confianza*, or trust, which contributed to their sense of belonging (Bartlett & García, 2011; Michael, Andrade & Bartlett, 2007).

This dissertation study builds on and extends previous scholarship in several important ways. First, the existing literature has tended to focus on the schooling of Latino/a immigrant and native-born youth (Bartlett & García, 2011; García, Woodley, Flores & Chu, 2012; Gibson, Gándara & Koyama, 2004, Valenzuela, 1999). This study demonstrates that not only Latino/a immigrant youth, but youth from other immigrant backgrounds as well, benefit from an emphasis on caring relationships between teachers and students. My participants from the Dominican Republic, Senegal, and Guinea, spoke about how teachers not only taught them academic content, but also how to become a better person. In speaking about one of her teachers, Nicole said, “He was for me like the best teacher because he taught me many things. Not just about the class, but about life, about how I should be, how I should develop better.” Nicole appreciates the way her teacher not only teaches her academic content in history or English, but uses that content, such as stories, to teach her life lessons that will help her become a better person. The emphasis on education for personal and social responsibility, and not just individual achievement, is also consistent with Kadija’s view of education as the fulfillment of obligations to family. Succeeding in school is one way that Kadija tries to honor the sacrifices of her family who have helped mold her into the person she has become. Kadija’s advice to other immigrants, “always remember what is behind you, so you can reach what is in front of you,” typifies her

view of education as not only a means to personal advancement, but also the fulfillment of civic obligations to family and community.

The second way in which this study extends the existing literature on immigrant youth and education is by demonstrating how authentic, caring relationships contribute not only to academic success, but their civic belonging as well. Achieving academic success has civic benefits because there is a correlation between educational advancement and civic engagement (Levinson, 2012). However, this study's unique contribution is to explain the role of civic belonging, including how immigrant youth create belonging by bridging linguistic, ethnic or religious differences. What further distinguishes this study from the existing literature is it considers how immigrant youth create civic belonging at schools where all students do not come from the same ethnic group. While still a majority Latino/a context, at International Academy and WCHS, students with different native languages, and different cultures were given the opportunity to collaborate on their learning and engage in problem solving.

A key factor contributing to youths' sense of belonging and social capital in previous studies was a common linguistic and cultural identity among students and teachers (Bartlett & García, 2011). Students and teachers created trust, or *confianza*, that was rooted in a shared Latino/a culture and by educating students' in their home language. However, this also led to fewer opportunities to bridge cultural differences in order to solve common problems, a critical civic mission of schools. This study demonstrates some of the possibilities, as well as challenges, of creating social trust in a school where students are encouraged to cross lines of difference to build caring relationships. As Assiatou observed about her photo of her schoolmates, "we all from different countries but we kind of family." The ability to forge trusting relationships that

bridge differences not only contributed to improved grades or Regents test scores, but also civic belonging, which provides critical civic benefits in a deeply divided society.

Implications for Future Research

An important area for future research is how civic belonging can be developed in school contexts that are not designed exclusively for late-arrival immigrant students. The education of immigrant youth in schools that only accept late-arrival immigrants created a protective environment for the development of their civic belonging. An environment in which all students were late-arrival immigrants contributed to shared vulnerability, hence making it possible to create reciprocal relations of care and trust. However, research is also needed that assesses the challenges and possibilities for creating civic belonging in schools that also educate native-born youth. In a school where first-, second-, and third-generation immigrant students are educated together, how can native-born students be taught to bridge cultural differences as my participants did? A factor contributing to social trust at WCHS and International Academy was the instructional method of encouraging collaboration. Can a similar educational model be successful in other school settings? How can other forms of diversity, beyond nativity and language, be leveraged to create heterogeneous groups of students who are expected to learn from one another?

Future research is also needed to focus attention on the creation of caring student-teacher relationships. This study's findings suggest that a school devoted to serving immigrant youth is more likely to generate caring student-teacher relationships, where teachers are concerned with more than test grades, but also students' social and emotional well-being. However, research is needed that examines the student-teacher relationship more closely. Moreover, this study did not

enlist teachers as participants. Therefore, a question that deserves attention is how teachers view their relationships with immigrant youth.

Another direction for research building on this study would be to enable immigrant youth to exhibit their photographs. A limitation of this study is that participants did not have the opportunity to share their photographs with an audience outside the research project. However, as Luttrell (2010) has argued, providing youth with a variety of audiences for their photos makes it possible for researchers, educators, and youth to attend to the ways in which context shapes how the youth represent themselves in their photographs. Therefore, even more could be learned about how immigrant youth construct belonging by considering how they choose to present themselves to their teachers, family members or their neighbors. Creating a photo exhibit for display in their community and giving them control over the design process would also demonstrate how immigrant youth attempt to bridge school and neighborhood contexts.

Implications for Teacher Practice

Recent research in the field of social studies education has explored effective pedagogies with immigrant youth (Bondy, 2015; Dabach & Fones, 2016; Hilburn, J., 2015; Taylor-Jaffee; 2016). Several of these studies examine the teaching practices of secondary social studies educators who teach immigrant students in ways that build directly on their civic assets. For instance, studies have investigated the pedagogy of teachers who highlight the comparative perspectives of immigrant students, such as their understanding of different judicial systems or human rights (Hilburn, 2015), and draw upon their transnational funds of knowledge, including how other countries view U.S. foreign policy (Dabach & Fones, 2016; Sánchez, 2007). Immigrant students' dual frame of reference was leveraged, including the similarities between their home countries and the U.S., to enrich the civic learning opportunities for both immigrant

and native-born students. Additional research with late-arrivals calls attention to the unique experiences and needs of this specific group (Salinas, 2006). Successful teachers of late-arrival immigrants were able to utilize the tools of historical thinking, such as gathering evidence from primary documents, to question notions of citizenship that exclude the perspectives of immigrant youth as racialized “others” in American society (Franquiz & Salinas, 2013).

This study’s findings regarding the creation of civic belonging from the point of view of immigrant youth themselves has important implications for teacher practice. There are ways in which schools can prepare immigrant and native-born youth for citizenship in a pluralistic society that go beyond the content-specific lessons taught in social studies classrooms. In order for young people to become engaged citizens, they must also be able to imagine themselves as part of civic community that works towards common goals. Critical to this task is cultivating civic belonging and the ability to bridge social divisions and create social trust. The schools in this study were unique in the diversity of their student body, including geographic, linguistic, racial, ethnic and religious forms of difference. Civic educators must capitalize on whatever diversity is present within the classroom to encourage perspective-taking, risk-taking, and student voice. Additional forms of diversity that present themselves in classrooms and can be explored include gender and socioeconomic diversity. Parker (2010) has argued that schools are ideal sites for this form of civic education because they supply the problems of conjoint living, and a diversity of students, the majority of whom are no more than acquaintances. In these two respects, schools can serve as mini-polities (Flanagan, 2013), where young people authentically experience the possibilities and challenges of sustaining a democracy.

A challenge and limitation of schools such as WCHS and International Academy, that focus exclusively on educating immigrant youth, is that when students leave the protective

spaces of their school and enter their neighborhood communities, they struggle to transfer many of the civic skills they learn in school in a society that is inherently unequal, and where asymmetries in power make the creation of social trust difficult. An important implication for schools is to think more critically about how they can facilitate structured opportunities for students to cross linguistic and cultural difference in order to build social trust with native-born students beyond their classroom walls. Schools can build upon the demonstrated ability of immigrant youth to cross linguistic and cultural boundaries in the school by building bridges to people and places outside the school context, in the neighborhood.

Schools can begin to accomplish this goal by engaging directly with the local communities of which they are a part, including how they design curriculum. As a starting point, schools might leverage the diversity present in their communities as a shared text for learning about local history. What would a social studies curriculum look like that encouraged immigrant and native-born youths to “imagine and produce the spaces of the world at multiple, flexible, and often interchangeable scales” (Mitchell & Parker, 2008)? Such an approach could engage students in a critical examination of the production of space, including how the boundaries that separate neighborhoods create spaces of belonging and exclusion. My participants experienced segregation first-hand in their neighborhoods, and could be given the opportunity to learn more about how and why communities became so divided. In a world history course, a unit on different religious belief systems might include learning the history of Muslims in New York City. Their learning could take students out into the community to visit places of significance to how Muslims claim space in the Bronx, such as the park used by my participants to pray during Eid, or to a masjid located in the community. These would not be mere field trips to give students a fleeting and superficial understanding of a particular religion before moving on to the

next lesson. A study of local Muslim history could include an investigation of the construction of different mosques in New York City over time, and consider why mosques in the Bronx look different than those in students' home countries, or how local zoning laws produce a particular



Figure 25: Photo of building

understanding or experience of place. These learning experiences could help youth claim space and public recognition for their religious or linguistic identities.

In their study of schools that successfully educate Latino/a emergent bilingual youth, García, Woodley, Flores & Chu (2012) found that a common element was the use of *transcaring* strategies. This approach created “third spaces” which “helped emergent bilingual youth negotiate rigid borders of languages, cultures, and ways of learning...” (p. 808). Through such teaching practices the curriculum both mirrored students’ own lives and experiences, as well as offered windows to the world beyond, which exposed students to new perspectives. Curriculum designed to bridge school and community could include viewing their neighborhoods as both mirrors of their own culture and ways of knowing, as well as windows onto a new world they have yet to experience. Sophia’s photos included one of a building in her neighborhood which reminded her of Sana, a city in her home country of Yemen (Figure 25). She recognized similarities in the architectural details, which shows how she imagined everyday places at

multiple scales simultaneously. Neighborhood explorations of the Bronx neighborhoods where students live could help immigrant youth to recognize the simultaneity of places where they live now and in the home country.

Students could also explore ethnic neighborhoods, such as Little Senegal, or take a class trip to the Yemeni restaurant where Yasser was reminded of his home country. In doing so, teachers could encourage students not only to compare what was the same and different about the U.S. and their home countries, but rather help them “construct fluid and new cultural practices that in some ways resembled, and in some ways transcended, cultural practices from their home country and the United States” (García et al., p. 808). I found evidence of students creating hybrid cultural forms through their participation in the African dance club they created. Students from different home countries worked together to create original African dances that reflected aspects of their home cultures, as well as U.S. cultural influences. These cross-border practices could be encouraged more explicitly in the social studies curriculum, by helping students straddle their home cultures and U.S. mainstream culture. When studying topics in American history, for example, students could learn about issues of racism, Otherness, and social justice from other time periods and historical contexts, such as the civil rights movements of the sixties or more recently Black Lives Matter. Students could learn about the contributions immigrants to the U.S. have made to this country throughout history, how previous immigrants dealt with the pressures of assimilation and exclusion, and begin to see their own struggles for belonging and civic inclusion alongside their immigrant predecessors.

Conclusion

The election of Donald Trump as the U.S. President has already heightened social divisions between students in public schools around the country (Southern Poverty Law Center,

2016). In a survey of teachers, 8 in 10 report increased anxiety among immigrant, Muslim, African American, and LGBT students (p. 4). Teachers reported an uptick in the amount of bullying taking place in school that is specifically election-related, such as the targeting of students based on which candidate they supported. Compounding these divisions are fears among teachers to discuss the election, given the emotional sensitivity it carries. In schools where the majority of students are from marginalized groups, as is the case at International Academy or WCHS, students expressed fears about the future, including how immigrants' rights would be curtailed as a result of new Trump administration policies. These fears have proven warranted by the quick actions taken by the new president to step up deportation of undocumented immigrants, including an executive order that threatens "sanctuary jurisdictions" with the removal of federal funding if law enforcement officials don't provide information regarding people's immigration status to immigration and customs enforcement (Executive Order No. 13768, 2017).

It is critical that researchers, educators and policymakers consider the impact of the current political climate on how schools prepare young people, immigrant and native-born youth, as civic contributors in such a polarized society. In many respects, the nation is as divided today as it was in 1957, when Southern states responded to school desegregation with mass violence against African American students, like Elizabeth Eckford (Allen, 2004). If we, as a nation, expect to heal these social divisions that breed distrust, schools must rethink how they can promote new habits of citizenship that further common understanding and equitable self-interest.

Moreover, as the participants in this study further attest, the notion of national belonging must be re-examined in light of the effects of globalization and the interdependence of people irrespective of borders. In response to the attempts of some political figures in the U.S. and

around the world to reify the borders that separate us, civic educators must re-orient their teaching to look outwards rather than inwards. Being and becoming a citizen today will require openness, curiosity about difference, and the ability to talk to strangers. As Allen (2004) contends optimistically, “most of us take pleasure from living among strangers. They are more often than not a source of wonder to us. Strangers help feed the human desire to learn” (Allen, 2004, p. 166). I share in this hopeful view that the human desire for connection with people who are not like ourselves will ultimately prevail.

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APPENDIX A

Codebook for photographs	
PLACE	What is the setting of the photo? (1-classroom, 2-school-other, 3-home, 4-recreational space, 5-neighborhood, 6-home country, 7-store, 8-subway, 9-movie theater, 10-work neighborhood), 11-library, 12-not applicable, 13-museum, 14-home(room), 15-home(kitchen), 16-imaginary
OBJECTS	What is/are the main object(s)/artifacts foregrounded in the photo? Foregrounded refers to something that appears to be the subject of the photo. An object is foregrounded if it is the central focus of the photo or if the central person pictured is handling it. (1-school material(s) (i.e. book, supplies), 2-religious (Koran, prayer beads, mosque), 3-school building, 4-mosque, 5-building-other), 6-technology (TV), 7-flag, 8-food, 9-not applicable (an object is not the focus of the photo), 10-natural setting, ie. Mountains, ocean, etc., 11-playground equipment, 12-streetlights, 13-graffitti, 14-transportation (subway, bus...), 15-snow, 16-dog, 17-necklace, 18-flowers/plants, 19-road
PEOPLE	Who/what people are in the photo? (1-participant, 2-group of people/strangers not in project, 3-family member, 4-friend/classmate not in project, 5-teacher, 6-another participant in the project is the subject, 8-unknown, 9-does not apply (there isn't a person in the photo), 10-person/people unknown to participant and not the focus of the photo, 11-teacher with student/friend, 12-teacher with participant, 13-TV/actress
PHOTOGRAPHER	Who is taking the photo? (1-participant, 2-other project participant, 3-family member, 4-unknown), 5-friend not in project
TIME	When is the photo taken? (1-morning before school, 2-during school hours, 3-afternoon (after school), 4-nighttime, 5-weekend/holiday, 6-unknown)
PRODUCTION	How is the photo taken? (1-using camera in real time, 2-photo of a photograph (taken from a cell phone or computer), 3-photo taken from internet (i.e. google image)



Codes:

Gender: (1) Male

Place: (13) Museum

Objects: (5) Building-other

People: (10) person/people unknown to participant and not the focus of the photo

Photographer: (1) Participant

Time: (5) Weekend

Production: (1) Using camera in real time

APPENDIX B

